THE COVENANT OF WORKS IN PURITAN THEOLOGY:

THE ANTINOMIAN CRISIS IN NEW ENGLAND

by

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Abstract

The dissertation examines the theological substructure underlying, and specific theological issues disputed in, the New-England Antinomian Controversy of 1636-1638. The substructure, concerning the place of created "means" and second causes in the work of regeneration, was fundamental to the mainstream of Puritan discourse, both technical-theological and homiletical, regarding individual conversion. The overarching issue in the Antinomian Controversy was the relationship of human and divine activity in regeneration. The specific points in dispute coalesced in the question whether a man could conclude, from his own works of sanctification, that he was truly justified.

The New-England elders, in concert with the chief body of Puritan divines, held that God deliberately employs created things, including human faculties, as means toward achieving holy ends. Human activity has a necessary, and doctrinally legitimate, place in regeneration; and men are competent to judge whether their works are "sound," and to conclude thence to their justification. Grace and human nature so work together that the gratuity of the one, and the integrity of the other, are each preserved. The New-England "errorists" (including John Cotton), in concert with contemporary English sectaries, regarded created things and divine activity as opposed in regeneration. Human activity has no place either in attaining to, or in evidencing, a gracious estate. Human nature is altogether subordinated to the direct action of the Trinity. In this respect Cotton differed sharply from his New-England colleagues.

Puritan "covenant theology" was an expression of the affirmation, characteristic of Reformed Orthodoxy, of the essential compatibility of created nature and divine grace. The governing conception of this theology was the "covenant of works," held to have been made between God and Adam at creation. In this covenant, God treated with mankind for blessedness in a way suited to man's distinctive natural capacities. In so doing, God bound himself to a modus operandi in dispensing eternal rewards, from which he cannot deviate. After the fall, redemption unfolds in accordance with the covenant of works. The nature of Christ's redemptive work, the necessary obedience of saints to the moral law, and the necessarily conditional form of the covenant of grace follow from the terms and circumstances of the first covenant. Covenant theology provided Puritans with means of maintaining proper tension in the dialectic of nature and grace, respecting regeneration, and of restraining the antinomian tendency to subordinate human nature to divine operations.

In the course of the study, the history of covenant theology in the Reformed tradition is traced from Ursinus to Ames, and New-England Antinomianism is defined theologically and in relation to English sectarianism. Particular attention is given the key systematic loci, concerning the place of created means and the liberty of man's will, which underlay Puritan thought and practice respecting the spiritual "rebirth" of sinful men.

Preface

Within little more than a half-dozen years after its founding, the Puritan commonwealth of Massachusetts Bay was troubled by a sectarian outburst which focused the attention of the assembled clergy, and eventually of the civil government, upon the church at Boston. There, certain of the congregation, led by Mistress Anne Hutchinson and abetted by the teacher of the church, Rev. John Cotton, charged that the clergy of the Bay, almost to a man, were in fact a company of unreconstructed "legalists," and not true ministers of the gospel. In the resulting wrangle, the religious and civil peace of Boston was temporarily rent, and that of the Colony as a whole threatened.

In the sweep of Puritan history, from its beginnings in the reign of Elizabeth to its brief triumph in the Westminster Assembly, the New-England Antinomian Controversy was a relatively minor event. At issue in the controversy, however, was a major theological question, namely, What is the relationship between created nature and divine power in the regeneration of sinful men? Because Puritan covenant theology was itself an answer to this question, that theology was implicated in the controversy. As understood by Puritan divines, redemption unfolds in accordance with a "covenant of works" made between God and Adam at creation, in which God treated with man for blessedness in a manner suitable to man's distinctive natural capacities. This conception of God's salvific activity presupposed the existence of a "sweet concurrence" between created

nature and divine grace in the work of regeneration, such that the integrity of nature and the gratuity of grace are each preserved. The New-England "errorists," in contrast, regarded created nature and divine activity as fundamentally opposed in regeneration, with important implications for the nature of God's covenant with men. For the elders of the Bay, the "covenant of works" was in effect the governing conception of the covenant theology, as preceding and determining the form of God's redemptive activity in the work of Christ and in the "covenant of grace." Covenant theology, moreover, was a manifestation of the respect for the liberty and agency of reasonable creatures which was the common property of Protestant Orthodoxy, in England as on the Continent.

The following essay was undertaken on the assumption that the study of Puritan divinity may shed additional light on events in Puritan history which have been partially illuminated from other perspectives.* In any case, the documents generated by the New-England Antinomian Controversy are in fact intelligible in the light of Reformed Orthodox divinity, and of the Sektengeschichte of the Reformation Era. Over-hasty discounting of the significance of these written lines, in the interest of polemics, animated narration, or imaginative interpretation, has served, in much of the secondary literature, to cloud the picture of what was at issue in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636-1638. In this essay, therefore, attention

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* The relationship of the following study to the body of existing scholarship, and the deficiency of that body in respect of technical Puritan divinity, are indicated in the Bibliographical Note, pp. 261ff, below.

is focused chiefly on the written lines themselves, rather than "between" or "beyond" them, and the reader will find relatively little narrative in what follows, and a great deal of technical theological argumentation.

The essay is constructed somewhat like a classic German sentence, in which the constituent ideas are nested together in a series of grammatical parentheses. The issue which brackets the whole is the Puritan conception of the relationship of regenerating grace to the created world, in particular, to man who is by nature a thinking, willing, acting being (Chapters 1 and 10). Affirmation of an essential compatibility between divine and human activity was fundamental to Puritan thought and practice. Puritan covenant theology embodied this affirmation, and served as a conceptual device for maintaining a proper relationship between created nature and regenerating grace in the work of redemption. This theology requires definition with regard to both content and history (Chapter 2). The New-England Antinomian Controversy, as an historic incident which illustrates the workings of Puritan covenant theology, provides a focus for the essay (Chapters 3-8). In this connection, New-England Antinomianism also requires definition (Chapter 4). The case for the fundamental place of the "covenant of works" in Puritan covenant theology is based on the relationship of the covenant-loci to other loci in the theological system (Chapter 9). Chapters 9 and 10 treat of the assumptions, regarding the place of created means and the liberty of second causes in the accomplishment of God's salvific intent, which underlay the major stream of

Puritan discourse, both theological and homiletical, concerning individual conversion. Because of their importance, and because they presuppose material introduced earlier in the essay, these chapters are placed last. In view of their content, however, they could also be placed first, as propadeutica to the study of Puritan divinity.

In treating particular topics it has seemed undesirable to clutter the pages with definitions of technical terms or with references to all of the pertinent points of Puritan divinity. Key expressions and concepts, however, are introduced with a footnote. For assistance in theological matters, the reader is referred to the titles indicated in the Bibliographical Note. In view of the variety of material cited, the matter of sources is addressed in a concluding note (in preference to merely recapitulating the footnotes). In quotations from 16th- and 17th-century sources, spelling has for the most part been modernized, though the original punctuation (or lack of it) is retained. "Orthodoxy" appears in the essay in two senses. In the phrase "Reformed Orthodoxy," the word is used, after the manner of historians of Christian doctrine, to denote that period (roughly 1570-1700) when Protestant theologians (both Lutheran and Reformed, in various ways) labored to systematize and to articulate the insights of the Reformation in the intellectual idiom of late scholasticism. In the phrases "orthodox Puritans" and "Puritan orthodoxy," the word has its ordinary sense of doctrinal correctness, with reference to confessional standards (v. below, pp. 11-17).

For his interest in Reformed Orthodoxy, the author is

indebted (as it turns out) to those providences of the course list which compelled him to spend a semester reading St. Thomas, and to Prof. Gerhard Ebeling, who devoted an amazing proportion (it seemed at the time) of his Christology lectures to David Hollaz, a paragon of the altprotestantische Orthodoxie. With regard to the essay itself, the author is indebted to Mssrs. Ernest B. Lowrie and E. Brooks Holifield, fellow students of the theology of Puritans, with whom he has been able to converse in the curious idiom of these pages, it is hoped to our mutual edification. He is obliged in a special way to Prof. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, who as director of the project has tendered needed counsel, while permitting the author freely to follow his own intuitions. And he is profoundly indebted to Prof. Ahlstrom, together with Profs. Edmund S. Morgan and David D. Hall, for scholarship on which he has drawn, for methods taught and ideas nurtured in class and out, and for pertinent criticism in matters of fact and style.

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Chapter 1: Nature and Grace in Puritan Theology

In 1697, six years after the arrival of the royal charter and five years after the affair of the Salem witches, in the midst of the struggle for control of Harvard College, two years before the Brattle Street Manifesto and three before the controversy over "Stoddardeanism," there appeared at Boston in New England a pamphlet entitled Phaenomena quaedam Apocalyptica ad Aspectum Novi Orbis configurata, Or, some few Lines toward a description of the New Heaven As It makes to those who stand upon the New Earth. It came from the pen of Judge Samuel Sewall, as part of his own humble contribution to an already vast Puritan literature interpreting the Book of Revelation. The work concludes with what has come down in the tradition as the "hymn to Plum Island."

> As long as Plum Island shall faithfully keep the commanded Post; Notwithstanding all the hectoring Words, and hard Blows of the proud and boisterous Ocean; As long as any Salmon, or Sturgeon shall swim in the streams of Merrimack; or any Perch, or Pickeril, in Crane-Pond; As long as the Sea-Fowl shall know the Time of their coming, and not neglect seasonably to visit the Places of their Acquaintance: As long as any Cattel shall be fed with Grass growing in the Medows, which do humbly bow down themselves before Turkie-Hill; As long as any Sheep shall walk upon Old Town Hills, and shall from thence pleasantly look down upon the River Parker, and the faithful Marishes lying beneath; As long as any free and harmless Doves shall find a White Oak, or other Tree within the Township, to perch, or feed, or build a careless Nest upon; and shall voluntarily present themselves to perform the office of Gleaners after Barley-Harvest; As long as Nature shall not grow Old and dote; but shall constantly remember to give the rows of Indian Corn their education, by Pairs: So long shall Christians be born there; and being first made meet, shall from thence be Translated, to be made partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.[1]

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[1] Samuel Sewall, Phaenomena... (Boston, 1697), p. 59.

This passage has been a trifle puzzling for scholars, there being some suspicion that whoever produced the abstruse, pedantic, and turgid body of the Phaenomena could not also have produced such poetry. There is also some suspicion that a Puritan was not properly capable of lyricism, or of sensuousness, save by a complicated process of sublimation. One may suggest, however--such reservations notwithstanding--that Sewall's paean, in its sensuousness and its cadences, is quite in harmony with the Puritan character.

This essay is primarily about theology, rather than about literature. One may begin, however, with a classic literary illustration of an attitude which was integral to Puritan life and thought, namely, an earnest affirmation of the essential goodness of the orders of creation.

As the work of God who is essentially good, and as the expression of his sovereign will, the substance of the cosmos, and men's participation in it, cannot be treated as essentially bad. There is no natural hostility between creation and Creator.[2] Upon this premise rested the distinctive asceticism of the Reformed tradition, which, unlike Roman Catholic asceticism, embraced the full range of human social and biological life, and embraced it affirmatively. Neither is there any inherent conflict between "piety" of the heart and "intellect" of the head, for it is the rational faculty that, together with the voluntary, distinguishes man among the creatures, and

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[2] E.g., William Ames, Marrow of Sacred Divinity (London, 1642), I.viii.17-22.

it is with respect to man's nature as reasonable creature that God treats with him. Theology, in William Ames' words, is "doctrina Deo vivendi," teaching about "living to God." Theology is an eminently practical affair (rather than a speculative exercise of mind), concerned not only with an individual's "general calling" to heavenly beatitude, but also with his "particular calling" in which he lives "unto God" in all his day-to-day existence.[3] Of both "callings," until death or the Second Coming, the created world is the theater, and man the reasonable creature is the actor. A man is brought into a state of grace in this life by the instrumentality of created things,--of words heard and read, of experiences good and bad,--stimulating the senses, persuading the understanding, moving the will. And the estate of grace consists in the ability and desire to order all of worldly living, in thought and deed, to the divine will as set forth in scripture and interpreted by godly minds (rather than in withdrawal from worldly living, or from ordered reflection).

Even as God endows men with reason, by which, surveying his handiwork, they may come to know that there is a God, so also he gives them the good things of the world to serve their own well-being and to support their pilgrimage toward heaven. It is axiomatic that men need to know of much more than his bare existence in order properly "to glorify God and fully to enjoy him forever."[4] They require gracious enlightening of

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[3] Ibid., I.i, ii; cf. Robert Rollock, A Treatise of God's Effectual Calling, tr. Henry Holland (London, 1603), p. 182.

[4] Westminster Larger Catechism, q. 1.

the mind whereby they are enabled to perceive God in his mercy and true excellency; and they require renewing of the will whereby they are enabled to desire God with a commensurate desire, by which together they are moved to turn to him, willingly and in faith. And men need to know that they must not use the world selfishly, or for merely worldly ends, but rather as means more adequately to serve the good of their fellows, to prosper the estate of God's true worship, and therein to pursue their own heavenly callings,--remembering in all things their utter dependence for both being and well-being, in this life and in that to come, upon the good pleasure of the Almighty.[5] But God by his word and Spirit has in fact made known "sufficiently and effectually"[6] all this and much more, touching what is needful for salvation. It is known that glorification of God is properly the chief end of all human activity, and that love to Christ is the supreme affection. And it is known by what means and avenues (of preaching and discipline) God brings his elect to the felicity which he has prepared for them. Cognizant of all this, and of the ends for which God intends the things of this world, the Puritan could enjoy them,--provided his indulgence did not divert him from primary loyalties,--secure in the knowledge that they were also the things of God, given for his good, and properly to be enjoyed.

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[5] Cf. John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," in Edmund S. Morgan, ed., Puritan Political Ideas (Indianapolis, etc., 1965), pp. 80f, 86.

[6] Westminster Larger Catechism, q. 2.

The urgent issue for Sewall's generation of Massachusetts Puritans was precisely to define and adequately to perform the duties incumbent upon them under that "national covenant" which they conceived to constitute the bond between God and their New-England Commonwealth. Sewall's point at the conclusion of the Phaenomena was that until the Kingdom shall come indeed, Massachusetts (or at least Newbury) will remain faithful to her calling as a holy people in covenant with God, in accordance with which she properly enjoys the bounty of the land. It appears, however, that the author will not be unduly displeased should the Lord tarry, an attitude suggesting a certain personal fondness for the land itself. There was good ground for such fondness in the theological affirmation of the created order, so that one may wonder whether Sewall's feelings were necessarily guilt-ridden. That he should express himself in sensuous imagery was, in any case, in harmony with the theological affirmation, and also in accord with the canons of Puritan discourse. For, believing that the mind is the avenue to the heart, and the senses the gateway to the mind, Puritan preachers, in order more directly and powerfully to convince their hearers of the truth of divine things, eschewed the flourishes and floscules of classical rhetoric in favor of the plain language of scripture and the imagery of familiar sensible things. The result, in the hands of a consummate practitioner, was a language of rich, if humble, metaphor. Whether a Puritan might revel in verbal images without conscious reference to divine things is doubtful,--that was part of the "Puritan dilemma,"--but he had few inhibitions

about employing them.[7]

To say this is not to minimize the poignancy of the dilemma of living in the world "as one not of it," of using the world "with weaned affections," as it was experienced by conscientious Puritans, but rather to accent the "worldly" side of that dilemma.[8] It is to affirm that the Puritan saint, remembering his obligations to God the Creator, Governor, and Redeemer, might embrace with a good conscience the perch and pickril in Crane Pond, the barley harvest, and the rows of Indian corn. It is also to affirm that this practical attitude toward created nature was matched by a characteristic Puritan respect for the power and integrity of the human faculties of intellect and will, both in the work of articulating theology, and in the substance of the theology articulated. Puritan piety tempered the expression, but by no means diminished the importance, of theological formulation, in which all the available tools of philosophy and rhetoric were employed. The formal disputation was a standard technique of Puritan education; and the preached word was held, quite literally, to be the primary "means of grace," by which a man, hearing and understanding, is persuaded actively to receive Christ, even as he is moved to "close" with any lesser good. These observations are necessary in view of the persistent

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[7] To this extent the celebrated "plain style" was itself an expression of the Puritan's respect for the goodness of creation. V. William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York, etc., 1957), ch. 4.

[8] V. Edmund S. Morgan, The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop (Boston, 1958), ch. 1.

inclination of modern scholarship, from Max Weber to Perry Miller and beyond, to interpret Puritanism, and the Reformed tradition generally, in terms of fundamental hostility to created nature, especially in respect of human biology, human intellect, and human agency. The result of this inclination is a tendency to treat the alternatives "nature-and-grace," "flesh-and-spirit," "reason-and-faith," and "freedom-and-predestination" as absolute contraries, with Puritans committed properly (if not categorically) to the latter member of each. It may be suggested that this is an interpretation which careful reading of the chapters, in any Reformed theological handbook of the period, on natural theology, man, the will, and the means of grace, will sustain with difficulty.

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Puritanism as it developed encountered a two-fold dilemma. On one hand was the political-ethical problem of living responsibly in the world, of participating fully in social, political, and economic activity, without becoming "worldly." The world was understood as God's deliberate creation, and therefore as essentially good, and secession from the created order as though it were perishing or polluted would be blasphemous. The world was indeed perishing, but God alone knew the moment of dissolution; and the Christian dare not opt out of normal historical existence before the last trump. In the meantime, however, all his activity must be conscientiously referred to God who is both beginning and end of creation.

On the other hand was the theological dilemma of maintaining justification by faith alone, the gratuity of grace, and the sovereign freedom of God's will in all phases of redemption, without violating the created order either ontologically or deontologically. God's redemptive activity must be so conceived that (a) the integrity of creatures, in respect of their own proper natures conferred at creation, does not suffer before the divine omnipotence, and that (b) the moral order given at creation, which defines man's relationship to God, is not dissolved. On the first count, man, by nature, possesses both reason and will, in which his distinctiveness consists, and in which he is, of all creation, uniquely fitted to enjoy communion with God. Adam's fall destroyed man's ability to achieve blessedness by his own endeavor, but did not alter his nature as man, and his redemption may not proceed contrary to the normal structures of that nature. On the second count God, in the Garden, promised Adam (and mankind in him) blessedness on condition of perfect obedience to the moral law written in his heart at creation. Adam failed, bringing upon himself and his posterity the threatened punishment for disobedience; but that did not alter the status of the law as God's immutable will for human conduct, nor did it alter the terms of blessedness, which remains contingent upon obedience to that law. Such was the problem of human salvation as it appeared to the Puritan theological mind, a mind which was characteristically, if not uniquely, dominated by the conception of God as absolute, all-sovereign will, and which habitually represented God's intentions for

men in terms of law.[9]

The problem of maintaining salvation by grace alone and the divine efficiency in regeneration, together with moral responsibility and the integrity of human nature, was not unique to Puritans. It was rendered especially acute, however, by the Puritans' peculiar self-consciousness and historical situation. They came as a movement increasingly to feel under divine obligation to achieve in England a nation of godly churches, as against a nation of merely baptised persons; and immense energy was focused on the task of distinguishing the saints,--energy which could not always be contained within the orthodox dialectic of nature and grace. The founders of the Bay Colony understood themselves to be called out from an Old and perishing England for the purpose of establishing in the New, if not a republic of visible saints, then a none-the-less godly commonwealth governed by them. Within the movement itself, and among its opponents, Puritanism encountered sectarian and humanistic efforts to simplify the dialectic of nature and grace, at both the political-ethical and theological levels. At one pole was an extreme separatism which sought to escape from ecclesiastical and/or worldly impurity, and a theological extremism which tended to assert that the Holy Spirit dwells substantially in the regenerate, at the expense of creaturely integrity, and to draw an absolute distinction between law and gospel. At the other pole lay varying degrees of compromise

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[9] V. West. Larger Catech., qq. 12, 13, 17, 20, 91-99; West Conf., chs. ii.1, iii, iv.2, xix; cf. Ames, Marrow (1642), I.i.9.

with the ecclesiastical and political kingdoms of this world, and an "Arminian" theology which tended to make the decree of election contingent upon foreknown faith, or to make the effectiveness of it depend upon motions of the individual will. This essay is concerned chiefly with the first, or "sectarian" response to the theological dilemma.

The problem for orthodox Puritans was to remain godly and pure without becoming otherworldly or amoral, and to uphold the freedom of God in giving, and the freedom of man in receiving, grace, without making salvation a consequence of human action,--without, in other words, abandoning responsibility to and for the world, or denying the distinctive doctrines of the Protestant Reformation. The theological and logical devices by which Puritans sought to meet this problem were for the most part devices which served to establish, in a characteristic Protestant fashion, a proper relationship between created nature and divine grace, in respect of salvation. Among them was the notion of a covenant between two parties, expanded by certain Reformed theologians, including leading Puritan divines, into a comprehensive understanding of God's dealings with men. The federal theology articulated in England and New-England, during the first half of the 17th century, reflected the basic Reformed concern for the goodness and integrity of the created order, and for the immutability of the moral order. The "covenant of works" with Adam was regarded as the primary <u>modus</u> by which God is related to and deals with humanity. God was held, in covenanting with man for salvation, to have taken man's distinctive capacities

deliberately into account, and to have secured man's perpetual obligation to the moral law. After the fall, redemption unfolds in accordance with the conditions established in the first covenant. Thus elaborated, the covenant-motif provided a means of maintaining proper tension in the dialectic of nature and grace. Inasmuch as the New-England Antinomian Controversy concerned the relationship of saving grace and human activity in regeneration, the theological issues raised in that altercation are referable in important respects to the systematic locus de foedere Dei.

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The phrase "orthodox Puritans," as employed in the foregoing paragraphs, requires explanation. Precise definition of the term "Puritan" is an object of perennial historiographical travail. A Puritan is evidently English, and by his own admission belongs to that branch of Protestant Christianity, stemming from Zürich, Basel, Strassburg, and Geneva, which calls itself "Reformed." Within this Protestant tradition a Puritan is distinctive in his intense concern for evangelical conversion and for following the divine will in all phases of personal and ecclesiastical life. But to what extent a Puritan is middle-class, in what proportion he is gentry, merchant, artisan, and common-lawyer, and in exactly what respect, in his various degrees of nonconformity, he differs from conforming Churchmen, and when, in fact, he begins seriously to do or be any of these things,--all this remains the subject of discussion and research.

In respect of doctrine, however, the problem of definition is somewhat less complicated. The Reformed churches are unique in Christendom in the facility with which they produced detailed formal statements of their faith. The material of Reformed symbolics is voluminous. This creed-making proclivity reached its apogee in the Confession of the Westminster Assembly (1643-1646), which, instead of merely defining the position of the English Reformed church on certain disputed doctrines, set forth a complete compendium of divinity representing the consensus of the leading Puritan divines. It is important to note, for reasons which will be suggested, that the Westminster Confession was a consensus, being representative as the fruit of debate, committee work, and the taking of votes may be representative. Nonetheless, for the period considered in this essay, an "orthodox Puritan" may be defined as one who could in good faith subscribe the Westminster Standards for substance of doctrine, perhaps excepting some points of ecclesiology. This would include the celebrated "spiritual brotherhood" of Cambridge divines, and the fathers of New England, and would exclude such Puritans (and Puritanesques) as John Eaton, Tobias Crisp, Giles Randall, and others whose opinions the Assembly found to be at best unsound.[10] The Puritan brotherhood was united by common appropriation of the articles of the Reformed faith, interpreted in the theological and philosophical idiom of Protestant scholasticism, and in

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[10] Journal of the Proceedings of the Assembly of Divines, 1 Jan., 1643-31 Dec., 1644, in Lightfoot's Works, ed. J. R. Putnam (London, 1824), XIII, 9, 12f, 186.

light of the Puritans' consciousness of the special place of the English Church in God's providential scheme. The Westminster Standards, it may be suggested, comprise a definitive formulation of a coherent Puritan theological position which came into being during the last decade (more or less) of the 16th century, and the first three decades of the 17th.

At the same time, one must note that this basic agreement among Puritans was obscured somewhat by the character of their writing. Puritan religious literature was overwhelmingly occasional, i.e., it was addressed to specific issues and situations, with appropriate selectivity in respect of subject matter and style. By far the greatest output was in the form of sermons, and devotional tracts and treatises based extensively on sermons. There is a considerably smaller genre treating "cases of conscience." There is also a vast body of biblical exposition (also frequently based on sermons), with a substantial subsection devoted to the apocalyptic books. The bulk of strictly theological writing is "controversial" in the technical sense of addressing doctrines in dispute with rival confessions (viz. Roman Catholics and Arminians). (Truly original systematic theologies, and substantial loci communes as they are encountered on the Continent, are conspicuous in their infrequency; though there is a myriad of catechisms for instructing the ignorant and the simple in the rudiments of Reformed doctrine.) The remainder of theological writing is concentrated largely on ecclesiastical questions. Rarely did a writer or preacher, addressing a specific issue, feel compelled to review the entire doctrinal system, or to indicate

all the points thereof which might be implicated in his topic; and his style was often deliberately accommodated to the intellectual abilities (and assumed spiritual condition) of his audience. That did not mean, however, that he, or the audience, were unmindful of where the issue under discussion plugged into "the order of the causes of salvation" (to borrow a phrase from William Perkins).

Accordingly, the argument from silence, in generalizing about a given Puritan's theological position, is to be used with caution. It would be dubious, for example, to say that because Perkins arranged his theological handbook around predestination, while Ames did not, and because Richard Sibbes, who wrote inspirational tracts about conversion and the Christian life, rarely mentions the doctrine, that Ames and Sibbes were in any theologically serious way less predestinarian than Perkins. The differences, it may be suggested, were partly occasional,--Perkins was par excellence a Kontroverstheolog, while Sibbes was preëminently a devotional preacher,--and partly a matter of personal temperament. (There were, in any case, explicit theological reasons why a preacher ought not to dwell excessively on the mysteries of the eternal decree.) That a man failed to address a particular doctrinal point does not necessarily mean that he rejected it.[11] There was, it may

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[11] V. Sibbes' remark in the preface to Ezekiel Culverwell's Treatise of Faith (1623): C.'s treatise "presupposeth a reader grounded in the knowledge of the nature and properties of God, of Christ and his offices, of the covenant of grace, and such like: because as in an arch, one stone settleth another, so there is such a linking together of points in divinity, that one strengtheneth another.... But however

be allowed, a theological consensus underlying published Puritan discourse, in the first half of the 17th century, which makes it possible to speak legitimately of "Puritan orthodoxy," even though its representatives did not give it comprehensive expression, or expound its articles in identical ways.

Having declared for Puritan theological consensus, however, the phenomenon of Puritan theological diversity must also be acknowledged. As individuals, Puritans (and Reformed theologians generally) were an independent lot. Underneath the confessional consensus, in virtue of which they might legitimately denominate themselves "Reformed," there emerges considerable variety in the ordering of loci, the interpretation of specific articles of faith, and the details of theological exposition. For this reason, depending on what he is fishing for, and on the fineness of his net, the researcher may catch a different Puritan with every cast, very nearly. In part this situation among Puritans reflects a certain unity-in-difference which was characteristic of the Reformed tradition from its beginnings. In respect of nuances of polity, liturgy, and theology, one can distinguish from the outset a German Swiss and a Strassburg tradition, as well as a Genevan, and in due course Heidelberg, Dutch/Lower Rhine,

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the knowledge of these things serveth the argument in hand; yet it must not be expected, that he should be long in these things, which are but coincident, and should be foreknown: which I speak, because some of weaker judgment, not considering the just bounds of treatises, may expect larger handling of some things. Whereas he hath laboured especially to furnish the argument in hand, and not to load the discourse." Quoted, A. Grosart, "Memoir of Sibbes," in Works (1862), I, xci.

French, North-German, and English subtraditions (or, if not "traditions," then Reformed communities with their own peculiarities).[12] By the end of the 16th century no single figure or locality seems to have enjoyed obvious preëminence. Calvin, for example, was regarded as one of many "standard Reformed divines," from whom individual writers drew as served their purposes of the moment, without feeling special loyalty to a particular figure, or at all obliged to take him in toto.

English and New-English Puritans shared this general independence. As suited their polemical and expository needs, they drew readily on all of the Protestant Reformers, on a host of later continental Reformed (and on a number of Lutheran) theologians and exegetes, on contemporary and medieval Roman Catholic scholastics, and on the church fathers. In logic, rhetoric, and certain aspects of theological method (especially in the stress on the practical character of theology, and the consequent ordering of the system), they tended to be Ramist. In psychology, metaphysics, and other aspects of theological method (e.g., on the relation of faith and reason, and the place of natural theology), they tended to be Aristotelian-scholastics. Only within certain dogmatic limits did an individual Puritan feel obliged, in theologizing, to hew to a given line.

These observations suggest that comparisons of individual divines should be restricted fairly closely to specific issues,

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[12] V., e.g., I. A. Dorner, Geschichte der protestantischen Theologie (München, 1867).

and that caution should be exercised in generalizing about a man's larger position, or his distinctiveness, on the basis of his remarks on a particular topic. The writings of Sibbes and of Thomas Shepard, for example, dwell repeatedly on the need for would-be saints to "attend upon the means of grace," to "go to Christ," to "get those frames" which are prerequisite to Christ's coming unto the soul, and "to labor to make their calling sure." To conclude from this, however, that these men thought little of predestination, or sought to diminish the sovereignty of grace in conversion, would be to infer something which careful reading of the pertinent texts does not support. In the same vein, Perkins is notorious as a "harsh predestinarian" and an uncompromising exponent of the sovereignty of the divine will. Yet he also espoused the doctrine of the natural liberty of the creature which underlies Sibbes' and Shepard's insistence on the necessity of human activity in conversion.

This essay, in respect of the New-England Antinomian Controversy, is concerned chiefly with the questions of the legitimacy of taking works of faith and sanctification as evidence that a man is truly justified and in a state of grace, and of a man's ability to judge of the soundness of such works in himself. These, in turn, are part of the larger question of whether, in effecting and testifying to regeneration, the Spirit employs created means. On these points, orthodox Puritans answered affirmatively.

New England was unique in the Puritan experience, inasmuch

as a godly commonwealth existed there for some thirteen years before the Puritan ascendency in Old England, and continued to exist, with remarkable unanimity, long after the English Commonwealth had succumbed to exhaustion, disillusionment, and Toleration. The fathers of the Bay Colony were entirely conscious of their plantation's exemplary role in the Puritan future. Hardly anywhere else were English Puritans so successful in embodying their convictions in godly institutions of church and state. The Antinomian crisis of 1636-1638 is of interest inasmuch as it represents the first serious encounter by an organized Puritan society with its own radical offspring, heralding things to come. More germane to the subject of this essay, the controversy is an historic incident which may serve to illumine the significance of the covenant-motif in Puritan theology.

Anne Hutchinson and John Wheelwright charged the elders of Massachusetts Bay, save one, with "preaching a covenant of works," as against a "covenant of grace." Their allegation was manifestly false, at least in any simple-minded sense of preaching "salvation by works" as a kind of boot-strap religion in which a man, by striving after personal righteousness, might earn his way into heaven. The ministers admitted human works to a legitimate place in the course of a man's transformation from a state of sin to a state of grace, but they did so in a way which was theologically consistent with the cardinal principles of the Protestant Reformation, the principles of justification by faith alone and by grace alone. Beyond the dissidents' slogan, however, the covenant of works,

as a fundamental motif of the federal theology, was implicated in the controversy, and the onus of heterodoxy lay, in fact, on the Antinomians.

Mrs. Hutchinson objected that the ministers did not preach the full gospel because they admitted creaturely works to the order of regeneration,[13] whereas the gospel of free

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[13] I prefer this phrase to "stages of" or "process of conversion," as being a more inclusive expression, and closer to the Puritans' intent. "Conversion," owing to connotations, acquired in a later era, of sudden, emotional religious experience, is misleading. For the Puritans the word meant the turning of a man from devotion to sin to devotion to God, which was instantaneous in time, but might be so subtle and initially so slight that one might not be aware of it immediately. "Stages" and "process" are also misleading, as they almost inevitably suggest variation over time. Puritans indeed maintained that the regenerate grow in grace, God augmenting the grace he initially bestows upon them, according to his pleasure and their diligence. They also maintained that conscious awareness and assurance of one's gracious estate might increase, or even diminish, over time. Whether or not one was truly gracious was for Puritans a question of urgent practical significance, and they devoted much space to delineating steps toward, and degrees of, rebirth, which steps and degrees might be experienced in time. It is important to note, however, that these gradations, insofar as they belong to a coherent scheme, were not understood primarily as a chronological sequence. Puritan discussion of the "morphology of conversion" (in the language of modern historiography), however useful it was for preaching, pastoral care, and personal devotion (and it was very useful), is not only a description of the subjective spiritual life of the Christian, but also an elaboration of what is synthesized in the theological affirmation that the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of law and gospel, separates men from their sin and turns them redemptively toward God. It is an elaboration of a theological and a logical sequence, rather than a temporal one, of an order of causes, and only secondarily of historical events. The order of regeneration begins with God's decree of election, encompasses the spiritual rebirth (regeneration) of sinful men, and ends with the glorification of the saints in heaven. Repeatedly in theological discourse, and especially in treating of the order of regeneration, Puritans employed a distinction between "order of nature" and "order of time" to discriminate between what is logically implicated in the being of a thing, on one hand, and historical occurrence or personal awareness, on the other. The "uses" and "applications" of

grace properly has nothing at all to do with works, which are rendered superfluous by the activity of the Holy Spirit. Underlying this protest were assumptions about the relationship between the individual Christian and the Persons of the Trinity, in regeneration, assumptions which ran counter to the orthodox understanding of the unchanging order by which God deals with men in dispensing eternal rewards. The teaching of New-England Antinomians in effect short-circuited the dialectic of nature and grace by which orthodox Puritans sought to uphold the integrity of the human creature and the sovereign freedom of God in saving men.[14] In Puritan federal theology,

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Puritan discourse concerning regeneration appear as conclusions from exposition of "doctrine," and much of what is treated in the latter is understandable only "in order of nature."

Reformed Protestants, in their opposition to Roman Catholics (who denied that subjective assurance of salvation is possible in this life) and to Arminians (who held that salvation and assurance are contingent on motions of the human will), were committed to the objectivity and irresistibility of regenerating grace: where it is truly present, one cannot remain always in doubt about one's spiritual condition. Grace will reveal itself in its effects. Most of the Puritans with whom this essay deals were so convinced of the logical orderliness of God's dealing with men for salvation, that is, of the "order according to nature," that they were able confidently to conclude from the effects of saving grace in themselves to its causes, without always having consciously experienced the causes. Whether this was indeed possible was one of the points at issue in the Antinomian Controversy.

[14] It is useful to note that "nature" in Puritan discourse has two senses. Strictly, it refers to what is essential to a thing as it was created. Thus, it belongs to the nature of fire to rise, of a stone to sink, of a plant to grow, of an animal to move about, of a man to think and to will. Loosely (and most frequently), the word refers to man's corrupt nature after the fall of Adam, by which he is rendered incapable of serving perfectly anything but sin. It is in the latter sense that the word appears in the recurrent opposition between "nature" and "grace," and it is to "nature" as "corrupt nature," that "flesh," in the opposition "flesh" and "spirit," is to be referred. Regenerating grace is not hostile to nature, but to corrupt nature.

the covenant of works, as the paradigm of God's dealing with men for salvation, was an expression of this dialectic. It specified the mode of God's redemptive activity in terms of a covenant of mutual obligation between two parties, in which God voluntarily agreed to act, not in his unlimited, absolute sovereignty, but in certain stated ways consonant with created human nature. To the Antinomians, this manner of speaking was unsound, as implying a commerce between the Trinity and the creature which they regarded as prejudicial to the sovereign freedom and holy purity of God.

The issues disputed in the Antinomian Controversy converged, it may be suggested, on the question of the nature of the transaction through which men come to partake of the redemption wrought by Christ. Was it by an immediate operation of the Holy Spirit, transcending, if not actually overruling, the faculties of the human creature? Or was it a transaction in which the Spirit employs means and instruments which belong to the natural, material world, including those faculties which distinguish men from lesser animate beings? and if the latter, by what means could the Spirit's work be recognized? In other words, was God's redemptive relationship with men truly described in terms of a covenant, and if so, what manner of covenant?

In the next chapter we shall consider the history of the covenant-motif in Reformed theology. Then we shall review the events of the New-England Antinomian Controversy, comment on the character and historical context of New-England Antinomianism, and examine the substance of the dispute between John

Cotton and the other elders of the Bay Colony. In the two final chapters we shall address the matter of the place of the covenant of works in Puritan federal theology.

Chapter 2: The Covenant-Motif in Reformed Theology: Historical

Puritan federal theology belongs to a development that began in the late 16th century with Zacharias Ursinus, reached maturity in the early 17th century in the work of Johann Alsted and William Ames, and continued, undergoing important modifications, in the work of Johannes Coccejus. In the formulation of Ames it belongs to the immediate intellectual context in which the New-England Antinomian Controversy transpired. The history of the covenant-motif in Christian thought in general, as well as in the Reformed tradition in particular, is a subject worthy of study in its own right. The following, by no means exhaustive, sketch is offered here chiefly as a means of characterizing further the "federal theology" treated in this essay, though also as a modest contribution toward adequate recounting of that history.[1]

The Bible itself is the source of the basic covenant-motif; and the figure appears in varying degree in the perennial Christian reflection (beginning with Paul) on the relationship of law to gospel, of the old Israel to the new Church.[2] In the middle ages the notion of a divine pactum

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[1] I have dwelt at some length on the permutations of the covenant-motif in the Reformed tradition, owing partly to failure to locate a single work in German or English which deals sufficiently with the subject. The reader whose chief interest is the New-England Antinomian Controversy will find the pertinent information summarized on pp. 30, 46-52, below.

[2] E.g., Gen. 9.9-16, ch. 17; Ex. 6.4f; Is. 42.6, 55.3, 61.8; Jer. 31.31ff; Ezek. 37.26; Mt. 26.28=Mk. 14.24; 2 Cor. 3.6, 14; Gal. 4.24; Heb. 7.22, 8.7ff, 9.15ff, 13.20.

with the church appeared in the work of Duns Scotus, and was current in the nominalist theology of the 14th and 15th centuries. This pact or covenant provided for the dispensing of grace in a stated, orderly way, and was held to be founded in God's generosity (liberalitas) and good pleasure (beneplacitum).[3] This nominalist "covenant theology" was the product of theological reflection on the divine activity in general, and in redemption in particular, rather than an elaboration of the biblical motif as such. In the Reformation Era the notion of a divine covenant with the elect for salvation, on the model of God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17), appeared early, especially (though not exclusively) among the Reformers of German Switzerland and the Rhineland.[4] The first literary effort expressly devoted to the subject was Heinrich Bullinger's[5] tract De testamento seu foedere Dei unico et aeterno (Zürich, 1534), which will serve, for our purposes, as terminus a quo of the development of the covenant-motif in Reformed theology.

Bullinger began by identifying the Hebrew berith with the Greek diatheke, construing both as meaning pactum or foedus in

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[3] V. Heiko A. Oberman, The Harvest of Medieval Theology (Grand Rapids, 1967), pp. 148, 167-174.

[4] Leonard J. Trinterud, "The Origins of Puritanism," Church History, XX (1951), 37-57; P. Jacob, RGG, 3. Aufl, I, 1518-1520. For the development of the covenant-motif in Reformed theology, and matters pertinent thereto, v. Gottlob Schrenk, Gottesreich und Bund im älteren Protestantismus, vornehmlich bei Johannes Coccejus (Gütersloh, 1923); Otto Ritschl, Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus, III. Bd. (Göttingen, 1926); Paul Althaus, Die Principien der deutschen reformierten Dogmatic im Zeitalter der aristotelischen Scholastik (Leipzig, 1914).

[5] 1504-1575; Zwingli's successor at Zürich.

the sense (after the Latin grammarians) of a solemn compact between enemies after a battle (2vo-4rto). In this sense God is seen to have covenanted with men for salvation, on condition that they "believe in God all-sufficient" and "walk before Me and remain upright" (11vo-15rto). In this, God is motivated by nothing on man's part, sed mera et native bona impulsus (6rto-vo). This covenant is first entered formally with Abraham, for himself and his faithful posterity, and is both fulfilled and confirmed in Christ incarnate. For Bullinger the stress falls entirely on the covenant with Abraham. The earlier patriarchs are included in virtue of the protevangelion in Gen. 3.15. There is thus a single covenant before and after Christ, of which Christ himself is the content. Our faith and that of Abraham are the same (8rto-9vo, 27vo). New Testament and Old Testament, new covenant and old covenant, differ non substantia sed accidentia; there is one eternal covenant, quod pro diversitate temporum varie dispositus (24vo, 27rto.ff, 37rto.f). The law, summarized in the decalogue, is given to specify the obligations due to God under the covenant, and to recall Israel from the laxity contracted during the sojourn in Egypt (17vo.ff, 29vo). Though the ceremonies by which the covenant was administered in the Old Testament are fulfilled and abrogated in Christ, the law, insofar as it pertains to the substance of the covenant, is fulfilled in Christ and remains in force (37rto.ff). Bullinger was primarily concerned to establish the substantial unity of the biblical testaments [covenants], and the identity of the faith of Hebrew patriarchs and modern Christians, and therein

to establish the antiquity and continuity of the Church. In this he was expressing concerns which may be regarded as characteristic of the Reformed tradition.

Calvin (d. 1564) occupied essentially the same ground as Bullinger. There is a single, eternal covenant, founded on Christ and fulfilled and ratified in him. All who are adopted by God into the company of his people are included in it, being bound by the same law and the same doctrine.[6] The covenants with the patriarchs and with us are the same "in substance and reality," yet "differ in the mode of dispensation."[7] There is one church among us and among the patriarchs (xi.2). The distinction between foedus legale and foedus evangelicum appears in discussion of the relationship between Old and New Testaments and is referred to the administration of the single covenant before and after Christ, respectively (xi.4). The two testaments [covenants] are distinguished by the relative clarity with which their common object and content is revealed,--indirectly in the old (under "earthly benefits," and in ceremonies and images "typifying Christ"), directly in the new (as Christ is displayed in the gospel) (xi.1,3,4,8,10). In the Old Testament the covenant was published in the physical

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[6] John T. McNeill, ed., Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, tr. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia, 1960), II.x.1, 4; xi.1,4,10.

[7] II.x.2. Patrum omnium foedus adeo substantia et re ipsa nihil a nostro differt, ut unum prorsus atque idem sit: administratio tamen variat.
II.xi.1. Eas omnes [differences between the testaments] sic esse dico, et ostensurum me profiteor, ut ad modum administrationis potius quam ad substantiam pertineant. Calvini Opera Selecta, ed. P. Barth & W. Niesel, III (München, 1928).

letter of the law and the observances enjoined thereby, which bind and condemn; in the New it is engraved spiritually in men's hearts, freeing from the former bondage (xi.4,8). The law, both moral and ceremonial, was given through Moses to remind the chosen people of the covenant made with their fathers, to hold them in readiness for Christ's coming, and to convict them of sin, thereby driving them to take refuge in the promise (ix.4;vii.1,6ff). As the rule of perfect righteousness the law is itself fulfilled and perfected in Christ (viii.51).

The crucial place in the history of Reformed federal theology belongs to Zacharias Ursinus,[8] inasmuch as he (1) distinguished a covenant with man before the fall which is contained in the natural law engraven on man's heart at creation, and (2) identified (after Melanchthon) this natural law with the divine law revealed in the decalogue, thereby establishing an essential connection between the two covenants.[9]

Ursinus, in his Catechesis, Summa Theologiae[10] (c. 1561), described the difference between law and gospel in terms of the respective covenants which are the content of each. "The law comprises the foedus naturale, made by God with man in creation." It is known to men by nature and requires perfect obedience to God according to the law, promising eternal life

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[8] 1534-c.1583; 1560-1576, theologian at Heidelberg; 1576-1583, at Neustadt a. d. Hardt; principal author of the Heidelberg Catechism.

[9] V. Althaus, pp. 155-161.

[10] In D. Zachariae Ursini...opera theologica, ed. Quirinius Reuter (Heidelberg, 1612), 9-32.

to such as perform it and threatening eternal punishment on those who do not.[11] "The gospel comprises the foedus gratiae, that is, not at all known to exist by nature." It reveals the righteousness required by the law to be fulfilled in Christ, and promises eternal life freely to those who believe in him. The covenant of grace is a mutual agreement, made possible by Christ's intercession, in which God pledges to be a gracious father and to give eternal life, and men in turn promise to accept these blessings by faith and to glorify him forever (art. 36, 31).[12] This covenant is one and the same, from the first promise given in Paradise (Gen. 3.15) to the end of the world, differing only in certain "circumstances and mutable signs of the covenant," in respect of which it is called either "old" or "new" (33). In both foedus naturale and foedus gratiae obedience to the divine law is the ground of blessedness. Man is created in the image of God, which consists in "true knowledge of God and of the divine will, and in the inclination and zeal of the whole man toward living according to this alone" (12). And man is created for the purpose of "worshipping God with his entire life in eternal blessedness," which worship consists in "obedience to God

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[11] Art. 36: Lex continet foedus naturale, in creatione a Deo cum hominibus initum; hoc est, natura hominibus nota est; cf. art 10: the divine law teaches quale in creatione foedus cum homine Deus iniverit.

[12] The notion of a covenant in creation was not necessarily original with U. Wolfgang Musculus (theologian at Bern from 1549 until his death in 1563) distinguished (Loci Communes, 1564) a temporal foedus generale in which God established the orders of the universe, and an eternal foedus speciale with the elect for salvation. Schrenk, p. 50.

according to his law" for the principal end of honoring Him (13, 14). The sum of this law and obedience is given in the commandment to love God with one's entire mind, soul, and strength, and one's neighbor as oneself (15). Since Adam's fall, and consequent loss of the image of God, no man (Christ excepted) is, or ever shall be, able to perform this obedience (18). It was precisely for this obedience, however, that God covenanted with man in creation, and God's immutable justice requires satisfaction for man's failure, before any reconciliation is possible (10, 73, 74). Satisfaction, accordingly, must be performed by a mediator who is capable of it, even Christ who is truly God and truly man,--and whose proper office it is "to restore the covenant between God and men, who have fallen away from God" (72). In the covenant of grace God promises to believers justification before him and inheritance of eternal life. Justification is by faith alone in Christ,--in particular, by gracious imputation to believers of Christ's righteousness and satisfaction (132, 133, 135). This is necessary

> because God, who is immutably just and truthful, will receive us into the covenant of grace in such a way that he nonetheless does not act contrary to the covenant made in creation, that is, so that he neither regards us as justified, nor gives us life eternal, unless satisfaction be given perfectly to his law, either by ourselves, or, if this be impossible, by another in our behalf.[13]

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[13] Art. 135: Quia Deus, qui immutabiliter iustus & verax est, ita nos in foedus gratiae vult recipere ut nihilominus contra foedus in creatione initum non faciat, id est, nec pro iustis nos habeat, nec vitam aeternam nobis det, nisi integre ipsius legi vel per nos ipsos, vel, cum hoc fieri non possit, per alium pro nobis satisfactum sit.

The prominence given in the Summa Theologiae to the foedus-gratiae-motif, beginning with the first article, is striking. Ursinus deliberately recurs to the figure throughout the treatment of doctrinal material pertaining to the administration of grace after the fall. In this the basic pattern of the doctrine of the covenant of grace, as it appears in subsequent federal theology, is essentially established. The covenant of grace, understood as mutua pactio in which faith and new obedience are the obligation on man's part, and as correlativum mediatoris, is seen to encompass the salvific restoration of man required by his lapse under the previous covenant. In contrast to the treatment of Bullinger and Calvin, the distinction between old and new (biblical) testaments is no longer simply identifiable with the distinction between old and new covenants. Equally notable is the place occupied in the order of salvation by the divine law, together with the assertion that this same law, given in creation, requires satisfaction if the covenant of grace is to be effectual. In Ursinus' subsequent writings the foedus naturale is not mentioned; the substance of the broader conception, however, is evident.[14] In this also, the basic pattern, in respect of the law, of subsequent Reformed federal theology is established.[15]

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[14] V. Explicationes Catecheseos Palatinae, sive Corpus Theologiae, in Reuter, QQ. XVIII; LX, LXI; XCII; XII, XIII; XV, XVI, XVII.

[15] Caspar Olevianus, U.'s colleague at Heidelberg (1561-76), and later director and theologian at the influential Reformed Academy at Herborn (1584 until his death in 1587),

Among the next generation of Reformed theologians who continued the development of the federal motif, Franz Junius may be mentioned in particular.[16] From the double condition of man evident in scripture, viz. of integrity in creation and of corruption by voluntary defection, Junius derived two covenants.[17] To the first estate corresponds the covenant in the Garden, in which God promised supernatural life in return for worship and obedience, and threatened death for failure to comply. In this God dealt with man not as with an equal but imposed upon him a relationship as does a victor on the vanquished. God alone is author of the covenant, and is moved by nothing outside of himself, but solely by his gracious will in election. Since it is impossible that the elect should perish, a second covenant is necessary after the fall, of which Christ is the substance, in whom is the beginning, means, and end of salvation. This covenant, which is essentially one, is administered from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to Christ, respectively, as promise, covenant-proper, and testament. In the latter, salvation is promised

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elaborated an essentially Ursinian understanding of God's covenants in several important works, employing the idea of a divine covenant for the first time as an organizing principle for dogmatics. Ritschl, pp. 417-420; E. Bizer, Historische Einleitung zu H. Heppes Dogmatik (Neukirchen, 1958), pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

[16] Ursinus' colleague at Heidelberg, 1573-1576 (also at Heidelb., 1584-1592); theology professor at Leyden from 1592 until his death in 1602.

[17] Theses Theologicae Leydensis (1592), xxv, xxvi, in D. Francisci Junii Opuscula Theologica Selecta, ed. A. Kuyper (Amsterdam, 1882).

Israel on condition of perfect obedience to the law, and, since this is impossible, salvation is conveyed in the promise of grace through Christ in whom the condition is fulfilled. Under the "new covenant" (since Christ's coming) the divine law in respect of the levitical priesthood, and the shadows and ceremonies of the "old covenant," are abolished. "Otherwise [the old covenant] is in substance the same with the new and eternal covenant" (xxvi.16). The form of the first covenant with Adam is that of mutual obligation to fulfillment of stated conditions. If either party fails in its obligations, the covenant is voided. The second covenant (even as administered after Christ) has the same form, being a "pactum which consists of a mutual and solemn obligation between God and man: God promising, through the death of his most beloved son, gracious remission of sins and eternal life, man in turn promising faith and obedience in baptism and the Lord's Supper" (29). The "general" end of the first covenant was God's glory. The "particular" end was man's good, and the covenant itself was concluded in a manner best suited to raise man above his nature, having reference specifically to Adam's original integrity, as possessing the supernatural image of God and so able to fulfill the imposed conditions (xxv.6,9). In the second covenant, faith apprehending Christ, as a hand and instrument receiving blessings, is a necessary (though not an "essential") condition of salvation, and is itself a gift of God (13). The new covenant is also intended for man's good and God's glory, being made to the end "that it may be well with men now and forever, and that God's great goodness,

mercy, and justice may be proclaimed eternally" (xxvi.29).

Here, one may suggest, is to be seen the essential parallelism between foedus operum and foedus gratiae (as they come subsequently to be called), which is characteristic of later federal theology.[18] Both covenants stem from the same divine decision to beatify men, both are mutual agreements, both involve a condition on man's part which is fulfillable out of a gracious capacity, both are accommodated to man's nature according to his estate, and the divine moral law is integral to both.[19] In this respect the formulation of Franciscus Gomarus may also be mentioned.[20] In his inaugural lecture at Leyden,[21] Gomarus defined God's covenant with man as "a mutual obligation of God and men, concerning eternal life offered them on certain conditions." This covenant is twofold, "natural" and "supernatural." Foedus naturale is made immediately by God with our first parents (and mankind) in creation, while they were yet in integrity, and is for eternal life on condition of perfect obedience to the law. It is properly called "natural,"

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[18] Amandus Polanus (1561-1610; from 1596 Old Testament professor at Basel) apparently gave the covenant with Adam in integrity its characteristic designation of foedus operum (Schrenk, p. 65). V. his Syntagma Theologiae Christianae (Geneva, 1617), Lib. vi, c. xxxiii. Cf. Johannes Wollebius (1586-1629; Polanus' successor at Basel), Compendium Theologiae Christianae (Basel, 1626), chs. viii, xxi.

[19] Cf. Lucas Trelcatius Junior (1573-1607; 1606 professor at Leyden), Scholastica et methodica locorum communium S. theologiae institutio (Geneva, 1611), pp. 164-172.

[20] 1563-1641; professor of theology at Leyden, 1594-1611, at Groningen, 1618-1641; a strenuous opponent of Arminius.

[21] "De Foedere Dei," in Francisci Gomari Opera Theologiae Omnia (Amsterdam, 1664), pp. 2rto-3rto.

being natura notum, because "it is written by nature in the hearts of men." It is repeated in both tables of the decalogue. In foedus supernaturale God offers reconciliation and eternal life on condition of faith and repentance on man's part. This covenant is merely gratuitous, and is not at all known to men by nature, but only by the supernatural grace of the Spirit. Whereas in the natural or "old" covenant, God is responsible only for bestowing eternal life, in the supernatural or "new" one he is responsible not only for the promise of life eternal, but also for Christ's fulfillment of the natural covenant, and then for enabling men to perform the condition of the new covenant as well.[22]

It would seem fair to say that, on the Continent, Reformed federal theology attained its basic form (at least insofar as it is encountered subsequently among English Puritans), among theologians who either had reached, or were entering on, professional maturity during the decade before c. 1600. From the next generation, as an example of the full formulation of the motif (prior to its further development by Coccejus), we may mention the work of Johann Alsted.[23] Alsted

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[22] Obligatio enim Dei in foedere naturali et veteri, est mera vitae aeternae promissio: in foedere supernaturali et novo est primum totius foederis naturalis, hoc est, non tantum vitae aeternae, sed etiam perfectae obedientiae legis in Christo promissio; deinde conditionis novi foederis donatio.

[23] Alsted (1588-1638) was a prolific, if not always original, theologian, philosopher (Ramist), encyclopedist; educated at the Herborn Academy, and (i.a.) at Basel with Polanus; instructor at Herborn (1608), prof. of philosophy (1615), of theology (1619); from 1629 at the newly-founded Reformed university at Stuhlweissenburg, Siebenbürgen. Regarded as forming the high-point of the Herborn theological tradition (Bizer,

deliberately refers the dogmatic material respecting salvation to two covenants, foedus naturae and foedus gratiae, which are essentially related in virtue of the unity of the divine law in both nature and gospel, and which are led back to the immutable will of God as lawgiver and governor.[24]

The basis of the scheme is laid in Alsted's definition of natural theology.[25] Theologia naturalis is the "doctrine derived from principles of nature, teaching the knowledge and

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Einleitung zu Heppe, p. liii). With A. may also be mentioned Matthias Martinius (1572-1630); prof. at Herborn, 1597-1607; from 1610 director and theol. prof. at the Gymnasium illustre, Bremen.

Herborn Academy, in the Rhenish territory of Nassau, was the nexus of a number of theological careers in which the federal motif figured: Olevianus, Alsted, Martinius, Ludwig Crocius (1586-1655), and (through the last two) Coccejus.

We leave out of account the "federal theology" of Johannes Coccejus (1603-1669) and his followers, on the ground that C. developed the heilsgeschichtlich element, inherent in the federal conception, in a manner substantially different from the men noted here, and from English Puritans. C. conceived of the divine-human relationship as growing through a progression of covenants which are read off of the biblical history, with appropriate attention to the particularity of each. In Puritan federal theology, the heilsgeschichtlich progression is overshadowed by the theological architectonic. The covenant-motif functions as a paradigm of God's salvific relationship with men, and as a device for arranging and/or interpreting dogmatic material; and the historical particularity of successive covenants after the fall is subordinated to the essential unity, before and after Christ, of the covenant of grace and of the church founded upon it. C., moreover, understood the progressive administration of the covenant of grace largely in terms of abrogation of the covenant of works, which was not entirely the case with Puritan federal theology. V., e.g., E. F. K. Müller, "Coccejus und seine Schule," Realenzyclopädie für Protestantische Theologie und Kirche, 3. Aufl. (Leipzig, 1896), IV.186-194; cf. Ritschl, III.439f.

[24] Cf. Althaus, pp. 128-137.

[25] At the very outset of his treatment of theology in the Encyclopedia. Johannis-Henrici Alstedii Encyclopaedia: septem tomis distincta (Herborn, 1630), Lib. XXV, sec. I (pp. 1555f), cf. Lib. XXI, cap. I, viii.

worship of God." Its source is lumen naturae, i.e., "right reason," and librum naturae, comprising conscience inscribed with the law of nature, together with creatures as images of God's wisdom, power, and goodness (p. 1265). Reason, reflecting on the book of nature, reveals God to the extent of his existence and eminence, and the worship of God "to the extent of the duty of piety toward God, and of man toward man" (1555). Lex naturae is nobiscum nata "and written by God's finger in our hearts" (1235), and that in prima creatione (1598). It is given "so that we may know what and how God is, obligating all reasonable creatures, and requiring that all be like unto him" (1237). It is also "an eternal rule of righteousness" and the "norm of [that] conformity" which God requires of men. Of it the decalogue, which applies to all men, is a compendium, and the sum of the decalogue is Christ's commandment (Mt. 22.37) (1598f).

The scheme is laid out in full in Alsted's systematic section (theologia didactica), in which the doctrine of salvation is developed with reference to two covenants (if not actually two manifestations of a single covenant), the whole being handled under the rubric of God's providence. Foedus naturae is treated in connection with the "special government" of reasonable creatures (1591f). Inasmuch as man is created in the image of God as rational agent, this government is exercised modo morali, and consists in "teaching and in performing" what is taught, viz. according to God's revealed will, which is the "rule for the rational creature in respect of behavior." This dual method illuminates the whole of theology,

and is reflected in the covenants of nature and of grace. Indeed, it is as a part of this special government that "that covenant [arises] between God and his own, in [which] God enjoins, promises, threatens, fulfills, and the creature promises obedience to God who treats with him."[26] In virtue of this covenant the creature's acts are intimately related to his well-being, or lack of it,--in particular, to his continuance in full possession of the natural and supernatural gifts which are comprised in the image of God. It is also the source of conscience's ability to judge of a man's subjection to God (1595).

God's covenant (singular) with man, however, is twofold, comprising foedus naturae seu operum, and foedus gratiae seu fidei, according to the state of affairs before and after the fall, respectively. The covenant of nature (which is also called foedus creationis, operum, et religionis naturalis) embraces both the giving of law, and the ordination of subsequent events (1595). The former includes not only the general law inscribed in man's heart per habitum, but also the special and positive law dictated to Adam in his capacity as head of the human race, which contains the promise of life (natural and eternal), and the threat of death, as in the words "do this and live; if thou dost not, thou wilt die the death." (This was foedus dei cum homine in creatione, taken strictly.)

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[26] Ex speciali gubernatione creaturarum intelligentium oritur foedus illud, quod est inter Deus et ipsos. In hoc autem foedere Deus, praecipit, promittit, minatur, implet, et creatura Deo stipulanti secum promittit obsequium (1592).

Ordination of events pertains to man's apostasy and restoration. Here one may note the essential unity of the covenant as the divine modus of accomplishing man's salvation, and the reference of the entire transaction, and man's behavior in it, ultimately to the divine will, which encompasses not only the terms of the covenant, but also their fulfillment.[27]

Foedus gratiae is treated in connection with the "execution of predestination" after the fall (loc. xx). Its substance is a gracious obligation between God and man, consisting of a promise on God's part, and a counter-promise on man's, both gratuitous (1608f). God promises forgiveness of sins and the writing anew of the law in man's heart, man promises faith and new obedience. Man's counter-promise is called gratuita, "inasmuch as man does and performs it by reason of the grace of God."[28] The form of the covenant of grace is that of a pactum between two parties. It is one in substance, but differs in administration, in Old and New Testaments, in respect of time, place, clarity, ease, and agreeableness. The distinction foedus vetus et novum is not, therefore, parallel with the distinctions foedus operum et gratiae, foedus legis et evangelii; "for in both respects, old and new, the covenant

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[27] In respect of the divine modus one may note that in the theologia catechetica (Lib. XXV, sec. II, cap. i), A. describes theology as treating, on one hand, of man's highest good, and on the other, of the means of attaining to it. This highest good is "friendship...with God, that is, union and communion with the holy Trinity," of which the foundation before the fall is foedus creationis, and which is restored after the fall in foedere gratuito (1565f).

[28] Cf. Istam vero conditionem homo implet per gratiam sibi datum (ib.).

is of grace and of the gospel" (1609). Evangelium is treated in terms of application to men of the covenant of grace and its benefits, and is defined as "joyful news" thereof (1613).

Integral to both covenants is the divine moral law, aeterna justitia regula. Since the fall no man is capable of fulfilling it. Nonetheless, owing to the immutability of the divine will, the law must be fulfilled, both in respect of punishment due for sin, and in respect of the totality of obedience required, if man is to be saved (1598). It is in this connection that Christ's office as mediator is understood (1609ff). Christ, by the sufficiency of his passive and active obedience, of which as God-Man he is uniquely capable, fulfills the necessary condition of man's restoration. In this fulfillment consists his mediatorial office, which is the fundamentum of the covenant of grace. The conditions of the covenant of nature, in effect, dictate the necessity, and the nature, of the incarnation, and also the work of the Incarnate. Law and gospel, in fact, are opposite termini of a single movement. Felicity prior to the fall depends on continued obedience to the law. After the fall obedience to the law remains the condition of felicity; and it is also the means and end of man's regeneration. In respect of God, Christ fulfills the condition. In respect of man, the law reveals his sickness, to which the gospel provides the remedy. The law provides the motive to seek grace, and, grace having been received, it supplies the norm by which the regenerate life is

ordered.[29]

In England the covenant-motif first appears prominently in the work of William Tyndale (d. 1536), for whom God's covenant with men was "the organizing principle for an understanding of the Scriptures."[30] All of the biblical promises are to be referred to a covenant with Adam after the fall, in which blessedness is positively related to faithful obedience to God's laws. Toward the end of Elizabeth's reign the motif appears more nearly in the form in which it is encountered on the Continent. Thomas Cartwright[31] treated the covenants of works and grace as the two parts of God's biblical word, which is ordained as the means of man's restoration after the fall.[32]

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[29] Lex manifestit morbum; evangelium monstrat medium. Quod lex imperat, evangelium impetrat. Per legem peccati cognitio; per evangelium peccati abolitio. Lex datur ut gratia quaeretur (1598).

Regeneratio incipit a lege, perficitur per evangelium, et definit in lege. Nam ex lege agnitio peccati, ex evangelio agnitio mediatoris, et secundum legem instituitur vita (1614).

[30] Trinterud, "Origins of Puritanism," pp. 39, 43; cf. Jens Møller, "The Beginnings of Puritan Covenant Theology," J. Eccles. Hist., XIV (1963), 51ff.

[31] 1535-1603; fellow of St. John's, and Trinity Colleges, and Lady Margaret Prof. of Divinity (1569-70), Cambridge; outspoken leader of the Puritan party in the Elizabethan Church. In 1573 C. fled to Heidelberg, where he enrolled as a student. About 1577 he settled in the Low Countries, returning to England in 1585. There is evidence of personal acquaintance with Junius and Trelcatius at Leyden. V. A. F. Scott Pearson, Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism (Gloucester, Mass., 1966), pp. 131, 190f.

[32] A Treatise of Christian Religion, or, the Whole Body and Substance of Divinity, 2nd ed. (London, 1616), chs. 12, 13; cf. A Methodical Short Catechism, in John Dod and R. Cleaver, A Plain and Familiar Exposition of the Ten Commandments (London, 1609), Aa6vo-Bb1rto.

The scripture shows two ways of recovering happiness, by works of the law, and by faith in the promise of grace (though since the fall the law is not such a way in itself, but only as a pedagogical "furtherance to the salvation which is by grace"). The covenant of works, contained in the moral law (of which the decalogue is a summary), was given to Adam in integrity, and promises eternal life for perfect obedience, threatening eternal death for the least defect. It is of perpetual use to the end of the world, obligating men to all the duties incumbent upon Adam in innocency, together with those required since the fall; though its chief use is to show that salvation cannot be obtained by works of the law.[33] The covenant of grace is made upon the breach of the covenant of works, i.e., immediately after the fall. It consists, on God's part, in the free offer of salvation upon condition of belief in Christ, and, on man's part, in "acceptance of the offer and submitting to the condition." Christ's two-fold obedience, in suffering the punishment and fulfilling the demands of the law, is the foundation of the covenant; and it is one in substance from its inception, though double in respect of circumstances of administration in O.T. and N.T.[34]

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[33] Treatise, chs. 14, 26.

[34] Ib., ch. 27; Catechism, Bb2rto-Bb3rto.
C.'s contemporary Dudley Fenner (1558?-1587) speaks briefly of a double covenant (duplex foedus) in two aspects, foedus operum and foedus gratuitae promissionis. God's covenant is "a covenant with man and his seed concerning life and death," on certain conditions imposed by God and accepted by man, viz. perfect obedience and receipt of Christ, respectively. The covenant of works has a double function in the fulfillment of predestination: (1) to bring the whole world

The first explicit British statement of the federal theology with which this essay is concerned appears in Robert Rollock's Quaesticnes et responsiones aliquot de foedere Dei.[35] God makes a two-fold covenant with man in which he promises some good upon some certain condition, which man in turn accepts. In the foedus naturae sive operum, eternal life is promised sub conditionem operum bonorum ex viribus naturae proficiscentium. The foundation of this covenant is natura bona, sancta, et integra, qualis fuit in hominis creatione, whence the good works required ought naturally to flow. This condition necessarily excludes faith in Christ and works of

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under condemnation, and (2) to increase the amount and misery of sin, driving men to seek restoration in the covenant of grace. The former function presumably refers to the fall of Adam, though F. is not explicit. The covenant-motif appears merely by way of introduction to F.'s section (Lib. IV) on the nature and work of Christ, and follows a section (Lib. II, III) on the acts of God toward fulfillment of the decree to reveal his justice and mercy in the reprobation and salvation of men (in particular in creation and fall). Sacra Theologia, sive Veritas quae est secundum pietatem..., 2nd ed. (N.P., 1589), Lib. IV, cap. 1-3. F. followed Cartwright to the Netherlands, where he was for a time the latter's colleague in the English church at Antwerp. Suspended from an English curacy in 1584, he returned abroad, becoming pastor of the Reformed church at Middelburg, until his death.

Cf. John Downame (ed.), The Summe of Sacred Divinity (London, [1630]) [which Møller, p. 58 nt. 3, identifies as Sir Henry Finch's Sacred Doctrine of Divinity, orig. publ. 1591], Bk. I, chs. v, xvi, xviii; Bk. II, ch. i. The covenant of works, of which the substance is obedience to the moral law written in Adam's heart in creation, is placed before the fall. The covenant of grace (of which the condition is faith) is treated in the context of a chapter on the person and work of Christ, viz. as mediator of a new covenant between God and men, who obtains justification for men by fulfilling the covenant of works.

[35] Edinburgh, 1596. Rollock (1555?-1599) was trained at St. Andrew's, becoming Principal (1583) and prof. of divinity (1587) at the newly-founded University of Edinburgh.

grace and regeneration. The covenant of works is repeated after the fall, especially in the transaction with Israel at Sinai, for the purpose of convicting men of sin, and of impressing upon them the impossibility of their fulfilling the condition of it,--thereby inducing them to flee to the covenant of grace.[36] The latter is treated in the context of Christ's work as mediator, in which he factus est nostra causa obnoxius foederi operum et legi, ut eos qui legi erant obnoxii, redimeret. Christ fulfills the law and covenant of works in our behalf. This fulfillment, accomplished in Christ's satisfactory and meritorious death, together with the mercy of God, is the foundation of that new covenant "which they commonly call the covenant of grace," by which reconciliation is effected between God and men. In respect of the condition on man's part, the two covenants are entirely incompatible, the one requiring works by the power of man's nature, the other requiring faith in Christ, which is ex mera Dei gratia...et tantum ex gratia. Neither is faith the condition of the covenant as in any sense a meritorious (though gracious) work, but merely as it apprehends Christ. Designation of the covenants as "of works" and "of grace" arises from their respective conditions on men's part. As far as Christ is concerned the second covenant depends upon merit, but as far as concerns men it depends only on grace.[37] The covenant of grace is made immediately after the fall, being repeated in

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[36] Ib., A3rto-A6vo.

[37] Ib., A6vo-B3vo.

varying clarity until its full manifestation after the coming of Christ. It is one in substance, though called O.T. and N.T. according to differing accidents. After the salvation wrought by Christ, the moral law continues in force as the rule of Christian duties, and of gracious works. It is no longer written merely in tablets of stone, but in the hearts of the faithful, and stands related to the covenant of grace as inserviens ac ministrans.[38] The covenant-motif provides the organizing principle for treating of the beatification of men, of which the condition remains fulfillment of the covenant of works.

Rollock's contemporary William Perkins[39] treated the covenant entirely in the context of God's decision to manifest his justice and mercy in the reprobation and redemption of men. To this end predestination, creation, fall, incarnation, and covenant are but means.[40] The just permission of man's fall, and the giving of the covenant of grace, comprise the chief work of God's providence (i.e., the divine activity ad extra, after creation, respecting the execution of the decree). The covenant of grace is "a compact made between God

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[38] Ib., B4vo-B6rto, B8vo.

[39] 1558-1602; fellow of Christ's College and lecturer at Gt. St. Andrew's, Cambridge; a major influence within the Puritan party as preacher, casuist, teacher of theology, and controversialist. The Golden Chain, published in 1590 as Armilla Aurea, enjoyed over a dozen editions in twenty years.

[40] A Golden Chain, or the Description of Theology, Containing the order of the Causes of Salvation, in Works (London, 1626), I, chs. vii, xv, xix; cf. An Exposition of the Symbol or the Creed of the Apostles (first publ. 1595), in ib., I, 152.

and man" in which God promises righteousness and eternal life in Christ, and man in turn "binds himself by God's grace to believe and to rest upon the promise."[41] This covenant is contrasted with the covenant of works, which is made on condition of perfect obedience to God's will (respecting both man's actions and his nature), and is expressed in the moral law,--of which law and covenant the decalogue is an abridgement.[42] The moral law is "fully" written in Adam's heart "by nature" in creation. As a creature Adam was bound to serve the will of his Creator, both in preserving the integrity of his nature and in performance of duties. His "particular calling" was to tend the garden, his "general calling" was to worship God. Of these obligations the specific commands respecting the two trees in the Garden were particular instances. Since the fall, mankind is under a double debt, viz. of fulfillment of the moral law from creation, and of punishment for Adam's breach of the law.[43] It is Christ's office fully to satisfy

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[41] Ib., pp. 159, 164f; cf. Golden Chain, ch. xxxi.

[42] Ib., ch. xix. P. speaks of a singular covenant,--as God's "contract with man, concerning the attaining of eternal life, upon a certain condition,"--in "two kinds," viz. of grace and of works. The covenant of works is not explicitly referred to the state of integrity, but rather to an exposition of the decalogue, which concludes with a section on the uses of the law post lapsum (ib., chs. xix, xx-xxix, xxx, xxxi). From this omission, Møller (pp. 60f) concludes that P. does "not know of a covenant before the fall." For the reasons following in the text, I am inclined to dissent from this use of the argument from silence. (P. does not have God make a covenant of works with men for eternal life after the fall, either.)

[43] Golden Chain, chs. xxxvi, ix; Exposit. of the Symbol, pp. 145, 152; An Exposition upon the first five chapters of... Galatians (first publ. 1606), in Works (London, 1617), II, 205f.

the law in our behalf, in both respects, by his "voluntary active" and by his passive obedience (neither of which by itself is sufficient for satisfaction). In this Christ is mediator between God and man in respect of the law, and is the foundation of the covenant of grace. He is the substance of the covenant in respect of the benefits conferred by it, and in the conveyance of them to the elect he is also mediator. Thus Christ is "the knot and bond of both covenants." The covenant of grace was made with Adam immediately after the fall, and is one in substance, though differently administered in Old and New Testaments.[44] For Perkins the divine decree and the means of its execution, rather than the covenant, provides the framework for organizing the matter of theology. The covenant-motif is inconspicuous, and the covenant of works is subsumed under the obligation to the moral law laid upon man at creation.

In the work of William Ames, Perkins' friend and rather independent pupil, the covenant appears as the basic form of God's relationship to men, as peculiarly suited to man's nature as a reasonable creature.[45] The Perkinsian ordering of

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[44] Ib., pp. 205ff; Golden Chain, chs. xviii, xix, xxxi; Exposit. of the Symbol, pp. 164f.

[45] 1576-1633; fellow of Christ's Coll., Cambr., 1607-09; 1611-1618, chaplain to the English community in the Hague; 1619, called to the newly-founded University of Franeker as prof. of divinity (though prevented by English intrigue from formally entering his office until c. 1622). In 1632, A. joined Hugh Peter in ministering to the Independent (English) congregation at Rotterdam (where Thomas Hooker also was), intending to remove to New England. He was frustrated by untimely death, though his wife made the journey, and part of his library became the nucleus of the library of Harvard

theology around the execution of the double decree of predestination is replaced by concern for the divine sufficiency and efficiency in bringing the whole creation to its ordained end, and, in particular, in bringing man to that felicity toward which he naturally tends.[46] Ames introduced the covenant in the context of God's providence (which is "that efficiency, whereby he provides for his creatures now made, in all things, according to the counsel of his own will" [I.ix.1]), and, in particular, of God's special government of intelligent creatures (I.x). Inasmuch as such creatures are in some respect immortal, and, being made after the image of God, "have an inward principle of their own actions preceding from counsel," God directs them toward an eternal estate of happiness or unhappiness in a manner agreeable to their nature (2). This special government or direction is "in a moral way," and consists in "teaching and in fulfilling" according to what was previously taught,--viz. according to the revealed will of God which is the rule of moral life for reasonable creatures (1, 4). From this peculiar mode of governing such creatures, "arises that covenant, which is between God and them" (later

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College. The Medulla Theologica, intended as a handbook for students and laymen, was first published in 1623, in Amsterdam, enjoying wide circulation in England and on the Continent. An English translation was published in 1642 by order of the House of Commons. A casuist and controversialist, as well as a prof. of divinity, A. may be reckoned the most influential Puritan theologian of the early 17th century, especially in New England. V. John D. Eusden, tr. and ed., The Marrow of Theology: William Ames, 1576-1633 (Boston & Philadelphia, 1968), pp. 1-11.

[46] The Marrow of Sacred Divinity (London: E. Griffin for H. Overton, 1642), Bk. I, ch. viii, 61-80. Cf. Medulla Theologica, 3rd ed. (Amsterdam, 1628), ad loc.

identified as the covenant of works [xxxix.9]), which is "a sort of transaction of God with the creature, whereby God commands, promises, threatens, fulfills; and the creature binds itself in obedience to God thus demanding" (x.9). This covenant is not between equals, but between master and slave, as it were, and is called accordingly the covenant "of God," and not "of man,"--though it is nonetheless a mutual agreement (10). In virtue of this covenant the moral works of the creature have respect either to final happiness as reward, or unhappiness as punishment; and from it conscience acquires the power and standard by which to judge of the creature's subjection to God (11, 13). The terms of the covenant are given in the moral law, which in respect of man is summarized in the decalogue and "written in the heart by way of a habit" (25). The covenant's foundation is the ability of man, as created, and its condition is "perfect obedience of works...to be performed by man of his own strength," prior to the conferring of any reward (xxiv.17, 19, 20). Owing to the nature of human cognition (beginning with sense perception), outward "symbols and sacraments" are added to the purely "spiritual" law, to illustrate and confirm it (e.g., the two trees in the Garden, the promise of continued life, the threat of bodily death) (x.29, 33). Accordingly, "the law or covenant of God with man in creation was: 'Do this, and you will live; if you do it not, you will die the death'" (32).

The second aspect of the special government of reasonable creatures (i.e., God's fulfilling, or ordering, of events) comprises man's apostasy and restoration (xi.1). The former

consists in transgression of the law of God, in particular in eating the forbidden fruit,--a sin containing pride, ingratitude, unfaithfulness, and violation of a sacred oath, and withal evidencing a "general profession of disobedience and contempt for the whole covenant" (4, 5, 8). The latter comprises Christ's work of redemption and the application thereof to men (xviii-xxiv). As mediator between God and men, and as the surety for the elect (as Adam was the common head of mankind), Christ became subject to all the laws of God, performing that obedience required of man "by the law of creation," and suffering punishment for the breach thereof (xix.11; xxi. 16f, 23; xxii.1, 5).

The covenant of grace is introduced under the rubric of the application of redemption (xxiv), which is accomplished in a "new covenant" "whereby God with greatest firmness performed that, which was contained in a covenant formerly made and broken" (10). This transaction is called a covenant, as it is a firm promise; as it is a free gift confirmed by the death of the giver, it is called a testament (11f). The new covenant is for the reconciliation of enemies (the old being between friends, as it were), and God alone covenants, man being utterly dead in sin and unable to enter into relationship with him (13f). It is limited in extent to the elect, and its foundation is Christ alone (15, 17). It promises not only life, but also righteousness and all the means of restoring to life (19). It not merely shows what righteousness is, but actually bestows it, and with it assurance of salvation (20f). It requires no antecedent condition properly so-called, "but

only following or coming between, and that to be communicated by grace, that it might be a means to perfit the same grace: which is the proper nature of faith" (19). The covenant of grace is one in substance from its inception (with Adam in the Garden [xxxviii.14]), though differing in administration, increasing by stages in clarity (1, 2; cf. xxiv.22). The O.T. contains the progressive administration of the covenant as it promised Christ to come, the N.T. as it testifies to Christ already come (xxxviii.4f). From consideration of the covenant of grace, Ames turned to predestination (xxv) as the reason for the limited extent of the covenant, and on the ground that the decree of election is evident only in the actual regeneration of particular men (1f).

By about 1630, the notion of God's covenant as the basic form for bestowing eternal rewards upon men, established in creation and fulfilled in the application, in the covenant of grace, of Christ's redemption to the elect, had become a commonplace of Puritan theology. Under this dialectic of covenants all of the theological system respecting man's fall and redemption, the calling and conversation of the saints, and the constitution of the church might be ordered, and by means of it a substantial amount of biblical material could be expounded.[47] The scheme was ultimately dogmatized, in 1646, in

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[47] E.g., John Preston, The New Covenant, or the Saints' Portion, 5th ed. (London, 1630), and The Breast-plate of Faith and Love (London, 1630), pt. I; Richard Sibbes, The Faithful Covenanter, in Complete Works, ed. Alexander Grosart (Edinburgh, 1862), VI, 1-25; Robert Harris, A Treatise Upon the New Covenant (London, 1632); John Ball, A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace (London, 1645); James Usher, A Body of Divinity,

the Westminster Confession, which will serve as terminus ad quem of the present study.[48]

From the foregoing historico-theological peregrination it emerges that while the covenant of works and covenant of grace in a sense balance each other, they do not in fact stand on equal footing. The terms and the form of God's dealing with mankind for salvation are established in the covenant of works at the foundation of the world. The covenant of grace functions merely as a means of applying to the elect the righteousness obtained by Christ, who satisfies the terms of the first covenant. Christ's mediatorship is defined primarily in terms of this satisfaction. The righteousness involved in both covenants is the same, being derived from obedience to the moral law. The covenants differ in that the covenant of works requires obedience to be performed personally, and by a power of man's nature given at creation, whereas in the covenant of grace obedience is performed for men by Christ. In the covenant of works, also, righteousness belongs personally to men, whereas in the covenant of grace it belongs to Christ, being imputed to men by God. The condition of this imputation, however, is a human act, viz. willing acceptance of the offer of Christ's righteousness (i.e., the act of faith), together with a vow of renewed obedience to the moral law. The

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3rd ed. (London, 1648); Edward Leigh, A System or Body of Divinity (London, 1654) and A Treatise of the Divine Promises (London, 1633).

[48] Westm. Conf., vii.2-6; cf. West. Larger Catech., QQ. 20, 22, 30-35.

covenant of grace, in effect, takes its form from the covenant of works, viz. as a mutual transaction involving a willing act on man's part. In this form the covenant of grace reflects an order of redemption which is designed by God specifically to take account of man's nature as reasoning, willing agent, and also to uphold the moral order established at creation.

The final two chapters will address, in systematic-theological terms, the matter of the place and function of the covenant of works in Puritan federal theology. At the moment, however, the stage is set for focusing upon the order of regeneration as it is manifest in the evangelical rebirth of individuals. This we shall do by continuing in the historical vein and pursuing the relevant issues through the thicket of the New-England Antinomian Controversy, inasmuch as that altercation turned on the question of the extent to which God, in regeneration, respects the integrity of human nature and the moral order, and employs created means. In the course of this pursuit it will be necessary to address the question of the nature and historical origins of New-England Antinomianism. We begin by reviewing the events of the controversy.

Chapter 3: The Course of the Controversy

> "Gov. Let us state the case and then we may know what to do. That which is laid to Mrs. Hutchinson's charge is this, that she hath traduced the magistrates and ministers of this jurisdiction, that she hath said the ministers preached a covenant of works and Mr. Cotton a covenant of grace, and that they were not able ministers of the gospel...."
>
> Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson at the Court at Newtown

> "Mr. Wheelwright, one of the members of Boston, preaching at the last fast, inveighed against all that walked in a covenant of works, as he described it to be, viz., such as maintain sanctification as an evidence of justification, etc., and called them antichrists, and stirred up the people against them with much bitterness and vehemency. For this he was called into court, and his sermon being produced, he justified it, and confessed he did mean all that walk in such a way."
>
> Journal of John Winthrop, March, 1637[1]

The founding of Massachusetts Bay enabled Puritans actually to put into practice that further reformation of the Church of England for which they had been agitating for more than fifty years. With the Colony's charter safe in Boston, they could, without interference of King or prelate, in fact enjoy all the ordinances that Christ intended for his church, and enjoy them purely. They could hear, freely and openly, that vigorous and learned preaching of God's word, which they regarded as the very means and instrument of regeneration, and, unencumbered by ceremonies, ornaments, and prayerbooks of "mere human invention," could make preaching the very center

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[1] Thomas Hutchinson, The History of the Colony & Province of Massachusetts Bay, ed. L. S. Mayo (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), II, 379; Winthrop's Journal; "History of New England," 1630-1649, ed. J. K. Hosmer (New York, 1908), I, 211 (hereafter cited as Winthrop, Journal, with vol. and page).

of their ecclesiastical life. Moreover, having at length gained the power of church discipline, they could protect the purity of their worship from defilement by the morally scandalous. Indeed, they might even restrict membership in their churches, for all practical purposes, to the very regenerate themselves. When they set sail from England, the founders of the Bay knew what they were about. They were to build a "city set upon a hill," a beacon-light in the New-England wilderness which would guide the reformation in Old England; they were to establish, even, a commonwealth of such singular holiness that it might be a place fit for Christ to descend at his second coming. But the practical details of how they were to accomplish all this had not been worked out. Having been more or less continuously hindered and hounded, they had had little call or opportunity to do so. The initial years in the wilderness, accordingly, were in certain respects years of flux.[2]

Flux, however, was peculiarly, even inherently, dangerous to Puritanism; for the absence of a standing order permitted the Holy Spirit to blow unimpeded, and in as many different directions as there were earthly spirits to receive Him. Puritanism as a movement was peculiarly susceptible of sectarian proliferation, for its entire religious energy was focused upon personal experience of the Spirit's regenerating work, and it stressed the ability of the individual to ascertain God's will directly from scripture by the Spirit's illumina-

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[2] V. Edmund S. Morgan, Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea (Ithaca, N.Y., 1963), ch. 3.

tion, unencumbered by ecclesiastical tradition.[3] In the theology of the leading Puritan divines, the fissive potential of this mixture was harnessed by a carefully wrought dialectic of nature and grace which gave each realm its proper moment, while avoiding extremes on either side. But in the hands of the less-sophisticated, it became dangerous, resulting most frequently in increasing intimacy with the Holy Spirit. Puritanism unavoidably became a haven and a nursery for sectarian spirits who required only the breakdown of order and authority to burst forth. In the excitement and disarray of the English Civil War, the Puritan movement broke up, beyond the normative pale of the Westminster Standards, into a congeries of contending sects,--anabaptist, antinomian, spiritualist, and chiliast,--each earnestly withdrawing from the errors and impurities of all the others, and each claiming to have sprung directly from the very word and Spirit of God.[4]

There was, moreover, an urgency about the Puritans' insistance upon a holy commonwealth and pure ordinances, which arose not simply from pious longing, but from such longing fueled by eschatological fervor, and by a sense of historical,

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[3] "Sectarian" is used here in a Troeltschian sense, referring to an exclusive, voluntary, non-theological, non-liturgical, and frequently anti-clerical, often democratic, religious association for which conscious experience of the work of the Holy Spirit is constitutive. V. Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, tr. O. Wyon (New York, 1960), I, 321-343. "Sectary" is used in the ordinary (but not unrelated) sense of "an adherent to a religious sect held to be heretical or schismatic" (Webster's Third New International Dictionary [Springfield, Mass., 1961]).

[4] V. Haller, Rise of Puritanism, ch. 5.

if not cosmic, destiny. Eschatological hope, centering on the glorious return of Christ to establish his kingdom on earth, is integral to traditional Christianity, but toward the end of the 15th century, all Europe seemed to fall peculiarly under the spell of the Apocalypse. The peasant revolts, the events of the Protestant Reformation, the aberrations of the sectaries, the wars of religion, even the outbreak of syphillis, had apocalyptic overtones. There was wide-spread conviction that the age of the world was drawing near its close, and the designation of the Pope as Antichrist and of his Church as the Whore of Babylon was not, for Protestants, entirely metaphorical. Elizabeth I was sovereign of the most Protestant country in Europe, locked throughout her reign in cold war with the empire of the Most Catholic King of Spain, whose avowed ambition was to recapture England for the Pope. In this, Protestant Englishmen perceived a special significance. For them, the Reformation had begun with Wycliffe, in England, and now England had become the bastion of the true faith, beset by satanic forces. It was, indeed, England's destiny, like Israel of old, to be an elect nation and "to lead the world back to God's true religion and end the tyranny of Anti-Christ."[5] After that, Christ would come. But if England was to do this, she must herself undergo further reformation, (Elizabeth having stopped only halfway). After the Hampton Court Conference (1604) this English destiny became increas-

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[5] Edmund S. Morgan, Roger Williams: The Church and the State (New York, 1967), p. 7.

ingly the burden of Puritans, who also became increasingly isolated and constrained, while time continued to run. There is an enormous Puritan literature devoted to interpretation of the rich imagery of the Book of Revelation, and Puritan preaching is filled with allusions to the contemporary eschatological situation. It was not impossible, to contemporaries, that the advance of Catholic armies on the Continent after 1618 was but the opening stage of Armaggeddon,--in which case the Puritan program for completing the reformation of England was a matter not to be tarried in.[6]

The westward swarming of Puritans, beginning in 1629, tapped a head of religious energy, pent up from two generations, under increasing public restraint, of earnest searching of scripture, listening to the Spirit, and reading the signs of the times, and let it spill out into the "free aire" of New England. It is in a measure surprising that, in the early years of the Colony, the Massachusetts Puritans were not more uninhibited. For the most part, however, they apparently took their mission seriously, as both a divine and a public trust, and they were blest with remarkably able leadership. In John Winthrop they enjoyed a conscientious magistrate distinguished for moderation and common sense, whom they were willing, in the main, to follow; and in John Cotton they received a zealous Puritan who (whatever his aberrant tendencies) was able to

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[6] V. Morgan, Roger Williams, pp. 6-10; and Joy Bourne Gilsdorf, "The Puritan Apocalypse: New England Eschatology in the Seventeenth Century," Doctoral Dissertation (1964), Yale University.

encompass the institutionalization of the drive for purity, without compromising it, while stopping short of out-and-out separatism.[7] Yet it was clear at the outset that not all those who came to the Bay had been listening to the same spirit, or had the same notions about the nature of the New-England enterprise. It was not for nothing that Winthrop, aboard the Arbella, insisted that their plantation, while it was to be a model of holiness, must also be a "model of Christian charity."[8] From the moment of settlement in 1629 there was disagreement on the matter of church order, and shortly thereafter differences emerged concerning the very order and nature of regeneration itself. On the first count, Roger Williams vociferously pursued the course of separation. On the second, Anne Hutchinson raised the spectre of antinomianism.

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Anne Hutchinson was born in 1591, the daughter of Francis Marbury, minister of the Church of England in Alford, Lincolnshire. Sometime thereafter, Marbury removed to London, but Anne returned, in 1612, to marry William Hutchinson, a local

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[7] On Winthrop's role in keeping the Colony to its task and restraining dissidents, v. Morgan, Puritan Dilemma. On Cotton's role in the formation of New-England church polity, v. Morgan, Visible Saints, pp. 80-106, and Larzar Ziff, ed., John Cotton on the Churches of New England (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), "Intro."; cf. John Norton, Memoir of John Cotton, ed. E. Pond (Boston, 1834), p. 65.

[8] For a deliberate, public expression of the spirit in which the founding of Massachusetts was undertaken, v. John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," in Morgan, ed., Puritan Political Ideas, pp. 75-93.

merchant. In the same year, the corporation of the town of Boston, Lincs., some twenty miles away, secured the services of John Cotton, tutor at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and by reputation a Puritan of note, as vicar of St. Botolph's Church. Anne Hutchinson became one of his most ardent admirers. She was by temperament a strong-minded woman, and was religiously inclined. Troubled about the constitution of the Church of England, she found relief (she later admitted) when God gave her, by an immediate voice of the Spirit to her soul, the ability to distinguish true ministers of the Gospel from those who, having the spirit of Antichrist, did not teach the new covenant. John Cotton and John Wheelwright, vicar at Spilsby, Lincs., and married to her sister-in-law, qualified.[9]

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[9] Cotton (1584-1652) was educated at Trinity (B.A. 1603) and Emmanuel (Fellow 1603, M.A. 1606, B.D. 1613) Colleges, Cambridge. He was converted by a sermon of Richard Sibbes (then lecturer at Trinity Church, Cambr.), a major figure in the Puritan party. C.'s own first sermon in the "plain style" set John Preston on the road to conversion. In 1632, faced with arraignment before the Court of High Commission, C. went into hiding. The Puritan patriarch John Dod counselled flight, and C. resigned his parish, sailing in June, 1633, for New England (in company with Hooker and Samuel Stone). In Oct., he was appointed teacher of the church at New Boston. In London awaiting departure, C. conferred with Davenport, Thomas Goodwin, and Philip Nye, persuading them to reject conformity in indifferent ceremonies. C. was by reputation an accomplished linguist and a devoted, if not otherworldly, student. His piety was earnest and single-minded (even among Puritans), sometimes at the expense of prudence, and also of theological reflection.

Wheelwright (1592-1679) was born in Lincolnshire, of a line of landholders in the Fen district. He attended Sidney Sussex College, Cambr. (B.A. 1615, M.A. 1618). In 1623, he succeeded his father as vicar at Spilsby, Lincs., remaining until 1631. He arrived in New England with his family in May, 1636, and was received in June, together with his wife, into membership in the Boston church.

For biographical notices in this, and subsequent chapters, I have employed mainly the D.N.B., the D.A.B., Mather's Magnalia (ed. Robbins, 1855), A. W. M'Clure's Lives of the

When Wheelwright was silenced in 1631, and Cotton emigrated to New England in 1633, Mistress Anne was deeply troubled, there being none left whom she might hear, until the Spirit bade her follow Cotton. In May, 1634, the Hutchinsons sailed from England. In London, just before departure, Mrs. Hutchinson confided to a fellow passenger that nothing important had ever happened to her but it had been revealed to her beforehand. On shipboard she shocked a clergyman by predicting the time of arrival at Boston, and on sighting the town observed that "if she had not a sure word that England should be destroyed her heart would shake."[10]

In November, 1634, William Hutchinson was honored by being chosen deputy to the General Court from Boston. Anne circulated among the women of the town in the capacity of midwife, finding therein opportunity to discuss their spiritual estates. She began holding weekly meetings for women in her home, at which she expounded the sermons of Cotton, now the revered teacher of the church in new Boston. She began to hold meetings for men also, and in due course progressed from expounding Cotton's remarks to criticizing those of other ministers. Anne Hutchinson's orthodoxy had been questioned briefly when she applied for church membership, but the elders

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Chief Fathers of New-England (1870), and Sprague's Annals of the American Pulpit (1857).

[10] "Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson at the Court at Newtown," Hutchinson, II, 383-385. For commentary on, documents from, and bibliography pertaining to, the Antinomian Controversy, v. David D. Hall, ed., The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History (Middletown, 1968).

had been satisfied and she was admitted. By the spring of 1636, however, opinions of such strangeness were heard in the mouths of members of the Boston church, and attributed to her, that the neighboring ministers called the matter to Cotton's attention. He made inquiries, but Mrs. Hutchinson was circumspect, and he found nothing amiss.

About this time Wheelwright arrived, and was warmly received by the Boston congregation. His views were similar to his sister-in-law's (though not in all points identical). By the fall of 1636, their opinions had become sufficiently apparent, and rumor of them sufficiently widespread, that the ministers of the Bay took alarm and came to Boston at the time of the General Court in order to confer with them. The points at issue were whether the person of the Holy Spirit dwells in the believer, and whether sanctification can be any evidence of justification.[11] All of them, including Cotton and Wheelwright, agreed that sanctification helps to evidence justifition, though Wheelwright and some others continued to hold the indwelling of the Spirit in, but not his personal union with, the believer. Shortly thereafter, however, Wheelwright was affirming that the believer is "more than a creature," and

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[11] "Justification" here refers to the legal transaction in which the regenerate sinner is counted righteous in God's eyes, is absolved in foro divino from the guilt of his sin, although he remains in himself a sinner. "Sanctification" refers primarily to the moral transformation in which, by infusion of graces by the Holy Spirit, the individual himself is rendered actually holy. This two-fold transformation of the regenerate corresponds to the twofold plight of fallen man who is alienated from a righteous God by the guilt of sin, and is himself depraved, i.e., morally incapable of rendering obedience to God freely. Derivatively, "sanctification" refers to the holy acts put forth by the regenerate.

that the Spirit and the believer are personally united, views in which the Governor, young Henry Vane, was presently found to concur.[12] Mrs. Hutchinson's followers in the Boston church sought to secure Wheelwright's appointment as teacher alongside of Cotton, and John Wilson, the pastor. John Winthrop managed to block it, protesting that they knew little of Wheelwright's spirit, and that what they did know was unsound.[13] Wheelwright went to the church at Mt. Wollaston

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[12] Winthrop, Journal, I, 195ff, 201.
Vane (1613-1662) was the son of Charles I's Secretary of State. At age fifteen he was converted to extreme Puritanism, refusing the oath of allegiance and supremacy on matriculation at Magdalen College, Oxford. (For two years, it is alleged, he refused the sacrament, being unable to find any who would administer it to him standing.) V. arrived in Massachusetts in Oct., 1635, being admitted to the Boston church in Nov. The following March he was made a freeman, and Governor as well. During the Civil War he was an important force in civil and ecclesiastical politics, though he eventually broke with the Protector, and fell from power. He was executed as a regicide. V.'s religious views were a puzzle to his contemporaries. He favored universal toleration, was hostile to a settled ministry, and was included by some among the "seekers."

[13] Wilson (c. 1591-1667) was educated at King's College, Cambr. (Fellow 1608, B.A. 1610). He was converted to the Puritan party by William Ames, whereupon he resigned his fellowship. He spent an interim at the inns of court, and as a private chaplain. From 1618 to 1630, W. was lecturer at Sudbury, Suffolk, where he made the acquaintance of Winthrop, with whom he sailed to New England. With Winthrop, Joseph Dudley, and one other, he formed the first church in the Colony (at Charlestown). In Nov., 1632, he was ordained pastor at Boston. W. was noted for his hospitality, compassion, and skill in exercising pastoral discipline (for which latter he is said to have enjoyed Ames' public approbation).
Winthrop (1587-1649) was the son of a Puritan cloth-merchant turned landholder. He briefly attended Trinity College, Cambr., leaving in 1605 to marry. He was Justice of the Peace at Groton, Essex, for a time a member of Gray's Inn, and in 1626 became an Atty. of the Court of Wards and Liveries. In Oct., 1629, W. was chosen Governor of the reorganized Massachusetts Bay Company, superintending the Company's great expedition in March of the following year. By extending to the freemen the privileges of the Charter, he achieved in Massachusetts one of the most liberal franchises then known. By

(later Braintree), and the affair now became a public quarrel.

In December, at a special Court of Deputies, Gov. Vane asked permission to resign, fearful, he said, of divine judgment upon the Colony for the recent dissensions in religion, and resentful of the allegation, by some, that he was the cause of them. He was reminded that two years previously, before he came, the churches were at peace, to which he replied that the children of the bondwoman would persecute those of the freewoman (alluding to persons under a covenant of works and under a covenant of grace, respectively). At the same Court, Wilson made a doleful speech on the state of the churches, and attributed the current dissension to the opinions lately risen up in Boston. This was ill-received by Cotton and the Boston congregation, who moved formally to censure their pastor. Cotton staid them, since the vote would not be unanimous, but gave Wilson a "grave exhortation" instead. In his speech to the Court, Wilson had mentioned a point that Cotton had addressed, in a recent sermon, concerning the value of sanctification as an evidence of justification. The question arose, whether any sort of sanctification could be evidence to a man "without a concurrent sight of his justification." Cotton and Vane denied it. In the uproar attending the admonition of Wilson, other opinions (Winthrop reports) also came to light,--

> as that the Holy Ghost dwelt in a believer as he is in heaven; that a man is justified before he believes; and

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temperament and practical training W. was a magistrate, to the judicious exercise of which "particular calling" he devoted his life in New England. He was reëlected Governor thirteen times.

> that faith is no cause of justification. And others spread more secretly,--as that the letter of the scripture holds forth nothing but a covenant of works; and that the covenant of grace was the spirit of the scripture, which was known only to believers; and that this covenant of works was given by Moses in the ten commandments; that there was a seed (viz. Abraham's carnal seed) went along in this, and there was a spirit and life in it, by virtue whereof a man might have spiritual and continual communion with Jesus Christ, and yet be damned. After, it was granted that faith was before justification, but it was only passive, an empty vessel, etc.; but in conclusion, the ground of it all was found to be assurance by immediate revelation.
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> All the congregation of Boston, except four or five, closed with these opinions, or most of them.[14]

The effect of these notions was to deny, in ways verging upon heterodoxy, the constancy of God's modus operandi declared in the covenant, and the orderliness and objectivity of the Spirit's regenerating work, and to cast the individual Christian, in his pilgrimage of faith, almost wholly upon his own personal experience of the third Person of the Trinity.

The parties were now sharply drawn. On one hand were Anne Hutchinson and her followers in Boston, together with Vane, Wheelwright, and Cotton. On the other were Wilson and Winthrop, with whom the rest of the elders apparently sided in a body, together with the majority of the magistrates. The infection was confined largely to Boston and the immediate vicinity, and the elders strove diligently in their own congregations to ensure that it did not spread. Insofar as it concerned differences of doctrine and issued in public alienation, it became the serious concern of the General Court.

A general fast was ordered for January 19, 1637, in order

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[14] Winthrop, Journal, I, 203f, 206.

prayerfully to consider and lament the estate of certain of the Reformed churches, including those in New England. On the fast-day, Wheelwright attended church in Boston, and Cotton invited him to preach. Wheelwright proceeded to divide professing Christians into two sorts, those truly under a covenant of grace, who are truly Christ's, and those under a covenant of works, who belong to Antichrist. The latter are mortal enemies, against whom the children of God must take arms and fight courageously with all the weapons of spiritual warfare. The only reason for true believers to fast, he declared, is the absence of Christ from them, which arises from the fact that His own are insufficiently prepared to do battle with the Lord's enemies. Christ's own differ decisively from their adversaries in that they base their "faith of assurance" on direct revelation to the soul of Christ himself, and of his righteousness freely given, whereas the "enemies" found their assurance upon some work of sanctification in themselves. The implication was clear, for all the ministers but Cotton, most of the magistrates, and "most of the people of God in these churches," were known to be of the latter opinion. The spiritual difference between the parties, Wheelwright observed, was infinite, and such that it could not stand with external peace. The language of the speech was figurative, but the tone was inflammatory. When the Colony sent an expedition against the Pequot Indians, the children of God at Boston refused to join, because Wilson, the chaplain, and most of the members were under a covenant of works, and because the magistrates who called them out were "enemies." The same spirit

appeared in town meetings and between neighbors. Members of the Boston church began disturbing the services of neighboring ministers with questions about the soundness of their doctrine and their callings, dissociated themselves from members of other congregations, and would admit none to their own unless they would renounce their sanctification and "wait for an immediate revelation of the Spirit." Every public affair, Winthrop wrote, had become an occasion for contention, "and it began to be as common here to distinguish between men as being under a covenant of grace or a covenant of works, as in other countries between Protestants and papists."[15]

At the Court in March, Wheelwright was summoned to answer for his sermon, and, the majority of the magistrates proving "sound," was judged guilty of contempt and sedition for having deliberately used a fast-day, intended as a means to reconciliation, as an occasion for fomenting further dissension.

In May, the Court of Election, for choice of a new government, was held at Newton (Cambridge), across the Charles River, where feeling was presumably less intense than in Boston. Gov. Vane insisted on considering a petition in defense of Wheelwright, before proceeding to election, but was defeated in a contest that nearly came to blows. Winthrop was elected Governor, and Thomas Dudley Deputy, and the Boston

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[15] "Fast-day Sermon," in John Wheelwright: His Writings, ed. C. H. Bell, Prince Society Publications, XI (Boston, 1876), 153-179; "Proceedings of the General Court Holden at New Towne...Oct. 2, 1637," in Winthrop, Short Story, reprinted in Hall, Antinomian Controversy, pp. 252-254; cf. Error No. 31, in ibid., p. 227; Winthrop, Journal, I, 209, 200.

faction was left out entirely. New Deputies from Boston were initially refused seats, and the Court, fearing the immigration of additional Antinomians, voted a measure prohibiting new arrivals from remaining in the Bay for more than three weeks without permission of the magistrates.

The ministers of the Colony, meanwhile, had not been idle. Since the spring of 1636 they had been quietly sounding the teacher of Boston on his views, finding certain of them offensive; and they noted his apparent good opinion of, and his familiarity with, those of his church who were spreading strange notions. After the affair of Wilson's admonishing, they "drew out sixteen points, and gave them to him, entreating him to deliver his judgment directly in them, which accordingly he did.... Some doubts he well cleared, but in some things he gave not satisfaction."[16] These "points" became the basis of a lengthy written exchange between Cotton and his brother clergymen, covering the nature, and order in regeneration, of faith, justification, sanctification, and assurance. The elders also met privately with Mrs. Hutchinson, for the purpose of ascertaining the precise nature of her teachings. Then, for three weeks in August and September, the teaching elders of New England met as a body at Cambridge, in open session, to deal with the questions of doctrine and church order raised by the Antinomians. Thomas Shepard opened the meeting; Peter Bulkeley and Thomas Hooker were chosen moderators. The elders collected some ninety "erroneous opinions" and "un-

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[16] Winthrop, Journal, I, 206f, cf. 203.

wholesome expressions" found to be held in the Colony, and condemned the lot. A reconciliation was effected with Cotton on the matter of union with Christ and sanctification as an evidence of justification, but Wheelwright remained obdurate. On the final day, the assembly formally disapproved of private meetings in the style of Mrs. Hutchinson, condemned the Antinomians' practice of putting private questions after sermons, and recommended against permitting dismission of church members over questions not-fundamental. John Davenport, lately arrived from England but not yet situated, was officially deputed to deliver the mind of the assembly in a sermon after its adjournment. Thereafter, wrote Edward Johnson, the condemned opinions were seen no more abroad "in a living manner, but sometimes like wizards to peep and mutter out of ground, fit for such people to resort unto, as will go from the living to the dead."[17]

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[17] Edward Johnson, Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Saviour in New England, ed. W. F. Poole (Andover, 1867), p. 119.

Shepard (1604-1649), educated at Emmanuel College (B.A. 1623, M.A. 1627), was converted by Preston in 1624. From 1627 he was lecturer at Earles-Colne, Essex. Silenced in 1630, S. spent an interim as a private chaplain before emigrating to New England. He arrived (after an unsuccessful attempt the previous year) in Aug., 1635. He was ordained pastor at Newtown, in 1636. The following year he married Hooker's eldest daughter. S.'s writings on "evangelical conversion" were highly esteemed by Puritans of his own and subsequent generations.

Bulkeley (1583-1659) attended St. John's College, Cambr. (Fellow, M.A. 1608), succeeding his father in 1620 as rector at Odell, Bedfordshire. In 1635, he sailed for New England with a company whose settlement he superintended. After a sojourn at Newtown, this company founded Concord, where B. became teacher of the church.

Hooker (1586-1647) attended Emmanuel (B.A. 1608, M.A. 1611), becoming rector at Esher, Surrey, in 1620. From 1626

The synod at Cambridge dealt only with doctrines and practices. The General Court, in November, was prepared to deal with persons. The Antinomians continued to render themselves disruptive and obnoxious, there were rumors that a group of English Antinomians were about to join them, and trouble with the Indians continued. It was clear to Winthrop that their continued activity was incompatible with public peace and safety. The light of the city on the hill was being dimmed, perhaps its very existence jeopardized, by dissension among the inhabitants. Accordingly, the leaders of the Antinomian party were summoned before the Court, as troublers of the peace of commonwealth and church. Judged guilty of sedition and contempt of the magistracy, they were disenfranchised and banished from the Colony. Lesser offenders received corresponding punishments. The Hutchinsonians in Boston were publicly disarmed.[18]

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to 1629 he was lecturer at Chelmsford, Essex. Faced with arraignment before High Commission, H. fled to Holland, where for a time he assisted Ames at Rotterdam. In 1633, he returned to England, departing thence (July) with his friend Samuel Stone and a company of settlers for New England. From these he gathered a church at Newtown, being ordained pastor in Oct. In June, 1636, he removed with his company to the Connecticut River.

Davenport (1597-1670) was educated at Merton (1613) and Magdalen (1615, B.D. 1625) Colleges, Oxford. After an interim as private chaplain he became a curate in London (1619), and in 1624 vicar of St. Stephen's Coleman St. He participated in procuring a charter for the Massachusetts Bay Company, and in 1629 was suspended for his part in the activity of the Puritan "foeffees." In Aug., 1633, D. fled to Holland, returning in 1636 to lead a company of Londoners to New England. He arrived on 26 June, 1637, and removed in April of the following year to New Haven. He was Preston's literary executor.

[18] Short Story, "Proceedings of the General Court... against Mr. Wheelwright," etc., in Hall, pp. 248-262, 283.

Then the Court turned to Mrs. Hutchinson. She was charged with having "a great share in the promoting and divulging of those opinions that are the causes of this trouble," with having said things "very prejudicial to the honor of the churches and ministers thereof," and with having continued the meeting in her house after the assembly of ministers had condemned it. She answered with some wit and much obstinacy, and not a little naivete. Asked to answer as to the truth of the elders' allegation that she had said they preached a covenant of works and were not able ministers of the New Testament, she demanded that they be made to testify to the charge under oath. Then she interrupted the ensuing wrangle to volunteer a full explanation of her meaning, giving personal revelations as her authority, and warning the Court that calamity would befall the Colony for their mistreatment of her,--"for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." This development transformed the case into one of heresy, which was outside the competence of the Court, while confirming the general suspicion that Anne Hutchinson was indeed the fountain of all their troubles. Whereupon, the Court, being prepared in any case to proceed against her for slander and contempt, found her "unfit for our society," and banished her from the Colony.[19]

Wheelwright removed immediately to the Piscataqua River, beyond Massachusetts' jurisdiction to the north. Mrs. Hutch-

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[19] "Examination at the Court at Newtown," Hutchinson, II, 366, 383f, 387ff.

inson was confined in a private house, where the ministers visited her in an earnest but vain attempt to convince her of her errors. In March, 1638, she was cited to appear before the Boston congregation, where, after some discussion with the ministers, she was formally admonished by Cotton for her willful and arrogant persistence in error. After a final attempt by Cotton and Davenport to secure her repentence, she appeared again. A written retraction was presented, which she presently retracted, and then proceeded to protest that she had never held doctrines, which, it was public knowledge, she had indeed held. Whereupon, the congregation, exercising its disciplinary function, voted to excommunicate on the ground of recalcitrant and deceitful behavior. About the end of the month she departed to Naragansett Bay, where members of her party had purchased an island from the Indians.[20]

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[20] "A Report of the Trial of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson before the Boston Church," in Hall, pp. 387-388; Winthrop, Journal, I, 263-264.

Chapter 4: The Nature of New-England Antinomianism

(a) Historical Context

Antinomianism has a long, if not altogether distinguished, history as a characteristic Christian sectarian aberration. It appears already in the New Testament, and enjoyed its latest and perhaps greatest flowering on the Continent and in England during the Reformation Era.[1] The name "antinomianism" derives from the distinctive mark of the syndrome, namely the denial of the relevance of the moral law to the true Christian, owing to the alleged ability of the Holy Spirit, in regeneration, to separate a man directly and radically from the matrix of worldly existence. The Christian doctrines of the work of the Holy Spirit, and of rebirth, contain the seeds of antinomianism, and during the 16th and 17th centuries it sprang up wherever free grace and spiritual conversion were vigorously preached.

Formally, at least, there are two sorts of antinomianism, one affirming that the moral law delivered in the Old Testament has nothing to do with justification, and the other that the justified have nothing to do with the law. In the Sektengeschichte of the Reformation both varieties appear, separately and in combination, in varying degrees of sophistication. The former, in the name of free justification and the power of the preached gospel, denies the preparatory function of the

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[1] V. A. H. Newman, "Antinomianism," New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (New York & London, 1908), I, 196-202.

law, before justification, as a "schoolmaster" which drives men to Christ by rendering them contrite for their sins, and it was constitutionally hostile to any suggestion of a causal relationship (of whatever kind) between works, law, or human agency, and justification.[2] The latter variety denies that the law is relevant to the relationship between God and Christians after justification, either because God no longer regards sin in them, or because the Spirit so dwells in them that they are incapable of sinning.[3] The debacle of the Kingdom of Münster in 1532 linked antinomianism inseparably with libertinism of the most flagrant sort, and thereafter the connection was regularly exploited for polemical purposes. This identification, however, was not only pejorative, for there were sufficient instances of excess and aberrance on the part of lesser figures than the Münsterites to give substance to the orthodox charge that antinomianism, of whatever kind, opened the way to moral license.[4] At the same time, it was

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[2] This view is associated classically with Luther's pupil, Johann Agricola of Eisleben (1499-1566). G. Kawerau, "Antinomistische Streitigkeiten," Realenzyclopädie für Protestantische Theologie und Kirche, 3. Aufl. (Leipzig, 1896), I, 585-590.

[3] In the 16th century, the more extreme version of this view was classically represented by the Netherlandish Libertines, and appeared most spectacularly in the Kingdom of Münster; v. George H. Williams, The Radical Reformation (Philadelphia, 1962), pp. 351-355, and ch. xiii. The more moderate version was typified by the Lutheran Antinomians Andreas Poach (1516-1585) and Anton Otho (c. 1505-?); Kawerau, RE (1896), I, 590-591; and in the 17th century by the English nonconformist John Eaton (d. c. 1640).

[4] E.g., "one Richard Hickman (minister) of Waddington, Oxon.... He sollicited Ellen Coalman the wife of Joseph Coleman to lye with her, and he strove with Marg(aret) Humfreys,

possible to maintain potentially antinomian doctrines without in practice condoning moral excess, and not everyone who might (technically) be labeled antinomian ended in libertinism.

There was no question that antinomianism could be, and was, subversive of established order in church and state. Yet the source of its disruptive potential lay not so much in its conclusions about the uses of the law as in its premises about the work of the Holy Spirit. Both "agricolian" (after Johannes Agricola) and "libertine" antinomianism exalted the unconditioned, immediate operation of the Spirit in the work of regeneration to the point of seriously minimizing, if not altogether overruling, the fact of the Christian's continuing rootedness in the ontological and moral orders of creation. The agency and instrumentality of creatures were regarded as incidental, if not altogether irrelevant, to the Spirit's gracious work, the power of which made the regenerate a veritable "new creature" not only morally, but also ontologically. Orthodox theologians conceived of regeneration primarily in terms of the infusion into man of supernatural principles, empowering him to new understanding and obedience, but without

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endeavouring to abuse her, and said it was no sinne to lett him have the knowledge of her bodie, and he would prove it: and there was a fame of their incontinency thereupon;...and when one of the Churchwardens was sent for wine for the Communion, he perswaded him to drinke to excesse with him, saying, if he would adventure his soule, he, the said Hickman, would adventure his bodie." Samuel R. Gardiner, ed., Reports of Cases in the Courts of Star Chamber & High Commision (Camden Society, 1886), pp. 310-311. Cf. John Strype, Annals of the Reformation & Estate of Religion...in the Church of England during Queen Elizabeth's Reign (Oxford, 1824), 2.2., pp. 189-191.

altering his condition as a creature, or freeing him from earnest struggle with the remnants of sinfulness in himself. Antinomians, in contrast, tended to regard regeneration as a spiritual transformation, elevating man above the moral ambiguities of creaturely existence, even to the extent of merging created and increated nature, thereby freeing the individual in important respects from the canons of "common," "earthly," "legal" morality. So a Dutch sectary could affirm of himself that "he is godded with God and co-deified with him, and that God is hominified with him," and a Swiss enthusiast could declare that he had attained a condition of perfect submission to the Spirit, was accordingly undefiled by sin, and that whatever he did (including decapitating his brother) was God working in him. In a less extreme form, an English "familist" maintained that through Christ he was accepted by God as perfect, that perfection may be obtained in this world, that "Christ dwelling in a believer, and being his guider and disposer, he may say, 'Repentance is hid from mine eyes'," and, referring to believers, that "'He that is born of God sinneth not'."[5]

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[5] Quoted, of Henrik Niklaes, in Champlin Burrage, The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (1550-1641) (Cambridge, Engl., 1912), I, 213; Claus-Peter Clasen, "Medieval Heresies in the Reformation," Church History, XXXII (1963), 394; Gardiner, pp. 189f. Cf. a "libertine" in London who allowed that Christians needn't pray, especially for forgiveness of sins, nor reprove one another for swearing or similar offenses, and that "if we keep ourselves within our castle, Christ, nothing that we can commit in this flesh can be sin unto us" (Strype, 3.1, p. 65).

The distinction between "increated" and "created" nature was employed by orthodox theologians to express the difference between the being and activity of God, which are necessary,

Also in such notions lay a potent threat to canons of doctrinal authority and church order, as well as of morality. If regeneration be essentially a private matter between an individual and the third Person of the Trinity, and be accomplished wholly by the uncreated power of the latter (which the

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and the being and activity of everything beside God, which are contingent. Increated nature includes the Persons of the Trinity and their respective operations. The created order includes everything else: e.g., heaven, earth, animate and inanimate beings, the biblical word, the preaching of law and gospel, and the gracious habits (or active principles) of faith and sanctification. The opposition between Antinomians and Orthodox boiled down to the question of the relationship between increated and created orders in the regeneration of an individual. Does God, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, act directly upon a man, either by dwelling in him bodily, or by otherwise overruling his will, so that one must say literally that the Spirit wills, not the man? This was, in effect, the Antinomian position. Or does God make use of the entities of the created order, acting normally (in the way that he first created them to act), together with created habits of grace, in such a way that the man comes himself to will what he should will? This was, in essence, the position of orthodox Puritans. In the Antinomian view, God works "miraculously," i.e., by overruling or transcending the normal way things proceed in the created order. In the orthodox view, God works "ordinarily," i.e., by arranging the activity of created entities so that they work together, according to their own proper natures, to eventuate in the gracious end that he intends. "Gracious habits," which God infuses into the soul of fallen man, thereby regenerating him, are distinctive in that they are foreign to fallen human nature, are gratuitously infused by God (not acquired through practice), and derive their power from Christ's power. Yet, inasmuch as gracious habits are contingent upon God (in respect both of being and activity), they properly belong to the created order.

Orthodox theologians insisted that men are saved "by grace alone," but they also insisted that grace works "mediately," i.e., through created "means." Antinomians, in contrast, insisted that "by grace alone" excludes created means, and that the Spirit, therefore, must act upon (or simply "act") a man directly. In New-England, John Cotton and the Hutchinsonians drew the same conclusion. Accordingly, they tended severely to minimize, if not actually to disregard, the instrumentality of created things, and insisted that in regeneration, and in the way of knowing that one is in fact regenerate, the Spirit operates directly upon the individual's mind and will.

regenerate might even come to share), then the individual is wholly independent of the mediation or instrumentality of created things. He need not rely upon the word of scripture in order to learn the will and ways of God, for the Spirit teaches him directly and more clearly. Nor need he come to Christ through earnest attendance upon the preaching of law and gospel, for Christ has nothing to do with the law, and he has Christ in his heart immediately by the power of the Spirit. Nor need he evidence his good estate by doing good deeds, for the Spirit in his heart tells him of his good condition. Yea, he need not fear the law, for what he does, it is not he, but the Spirit acting in him. These radical conclusions were not always explicitly drawn by men who held antinomian premises about the work of the Spirit. Nevertheless the orthodox were quick to perceive that such doctrines involved a theologically unacceptable simplification of the dialectic of nature and grace by which Protestant theologians sought to hold in balance the conflicting tendencies inherent in the doctrine of spiritual rebirth, and it is at this point, primarily, that the nub of controversy between orthodox Puritans and their antinomian brethren is to be sought.

The association, by certain contemporaries, of the New-England Antinomians with the horrors of Münster was highly imaginative. They were stiff-necked, obstreperous, and disturbers of the peace of church and state, but libertines they were not. Mistress Hutchinson flatly and frankly rejected the alleged libertine tenet that women are to be held in common, and she and her followers were much regarded for the godliness

of their living (charity toward opponents and respect for magistrates excepted).[6] New-England antinomianism was not (or at least not primarily) libertine, but rather theological and political. Its exponents were banished and otherwise disciplined chiefly for the public consequences of their opinions, rather than for their opinions *per se*, though their opinions were such as to set them fundamentally at odds with the established order. The Hutchinsonians were charged with fostering disunity in the Colony, with disrespect of constituted authority, and with slanderous remarks. Mistress Anne was formally excommunicated from the Boston church for the impropriety of her behavior (in particular for lying to the assembled congregation), and she was examined before the Court not for holding unorthodox views, but for disseminating them. One of her supporters, protesting to the Court that he was being punished for his judgment, was bluntly told, Not for his judgment, but for not keeping it to himself, and so disturbing the public peace.[7] This distinction was more than merely casuistical, for the authorities of the Bay were genuinely reluctant to prosecute for opinion's sake alone, and were earnest in their

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[6] "An Examination of Mrs. Hutchinson at Newtown," Hutchinson, II, 388; Winthrop, Short Story, in Hall, pp. 275f; Johnson, Wonder-working Providence, p. 100; John G. Palfrey, History of New England During the Stuart Dynasty (Boston, 1859), I, 487, nt. 2. It may be noted, though, that in Dec., 1640, "one Hugh Bewett was banished for holding publicly and maintaining that he was free from original sin and from actual also for half a year before, and that all true Christians after (blank) are enabled to live without committing actual sin," Winthrop, Journal, II, 17. Church Trial, in Hall, p. 362.

[7] V. chap. 3, nts. 19, 20; Examination, Hutchinson, II, 366-367; Short Story, in Hall, p. 259.

efforts to reason with and convince the principal deviants of their errors before proceeding to legal measures. Behind the Hutchinsonians' behavior lay a characteristic sectarian striving after heaven, or at least heavenly purity, which abides no compromise with things of this world. Insofar as this striving threatened the cohesiveness necessary to the safety of a new colony in the wilderness, and insofar as it threatened the fine balance between living in the world and being a holy people, which was the peculiar estate of Massachusetts Bay, they became the concern of the government, and Winthrop sought with all his might to check them.[8] At the same time, insofar as the Hutchinsonians' ideas about the Spirit's operation threatened the traditional balance between created instrumentality and increated power in the work of regeneration, and insofar as they in fact espoused fragments of traditional Christian heresies, the ministers of the Bay reasoned with them, debated them, and strove to refute them.

It is in this connection that the names "Antinomian" and "Familist" are of interest. Thomas Weld, in his preface to the Short Story, applied these labels to the errors and "unsafe" speeches which were condemned by the synod at Cambridge.[9] In some cases the categories were stretched, but in general the designations were accurate. By the 1630's the terms "Familist" and "Antinomian" had acquired fairly specific mean-

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[8] V. Morgan, Puritan Dilemma, ch. x.

[9] V. the "Catalogue of erroneous opinions...[and] unsavoury speeches," Short Story, in Hall, pp. 219-247.

ing in English ecclesiastical circles, as referring to diffuse, but nonetheless identifiable, sectarianisms then current in England. There was evidently a continuous if unspectacular English tradition of Reformation sectarianism from the time of Edward VI, and scattered references to opinions which cropped up in Massachusetts can be found as early as the second decade of Elizabeth.[10] "Familists" were regarded (whether or not always correctly) as disciples of Henrik Niklaes (d. c. 1580), a Dutch sectary and founder of the so-called "Family of Love," whose ideas gained a following in England in the early 1570's, especially in Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire.[11] Familists held that the persons of the Trinity are united with the regenerate; that the godly cannot sin (hence praying for forgiveness is useless, if not blasphemous); that the Spirit, not the letter of the Bible, is the word of God; and that Adam's perfection ante lapsum can be attained in this life. They also denied the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul.[12] "Antinomians" were not associated with a par-

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[10] E.g., a "libertine" in London is reported, in 1581, to have held "That no outward thing, as the works of sanctification, unfeigned forgiveness of others, or such like, can be pledges, either to ourselves or others, of our election." Strype, 3.1, p. 64; v. also William Wilkinson, A Confutation of certain Articles delivered unto the Family of Love (London, 1579).

[11] Wilkinson, iii vo.-iiii rto.; Strype, 2.1, pp. 487, 486, 556; Thomas Edwards, Gangraena: or a Catalogue and Discovery of many of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies, and pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of this time (London, 1646), I, pp. 76, 84.

[12] Strype, 2.2, p. 287, Gardiner, pp. 192-193; Stephen Denison, The White Wolfe (London, 1627), p. 39, Strype, 2.2, pp. 284-286, Gardiner, Reports, pp. 188-189, 191; Strype,

ticular founder, though their tenets were distinctive enough to render them identifiable as a group. They held, in general, that the consciences of believers are not bound by the law, God seeing no sin in them; that assurance is not to be doubted of, once obtained; that praying for forgiveness is superfluous; that we are justified before we believe; that faith is the discovery of our justification; and that sanctification is no evidence of justification.[13] Both of these sectarianisms were technically antinomian, and characteristic tenets of both were frequently held by the same individual.

The history of English sectarianism, from medieval times, is worthy of attention, especially in respect of the flowering of sects and heretics during the Civil War, for that flowering, one may suggest, resulted not only from the working-out of tensions inherent in orthodox Puritanism, but from the working-out of such tensions in the presence of an amorphous substratum of popular doctrinal aberrations, which were propagated over generations by Winkelprediger and self-styled prophets, as well as by regular clerics of dubious orthodoxy. In the upsurge of religious excitement, of which Puritanism was the principal vehicle, this substratum provided nuclei upon which the individualism fostered by Puritan preaching might seize, issuing in a variety of subtle and not-so-subtle

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2.2, p. 88, Wilkinson ad cap. 23.4 Ev. Regni; Strype, 2.1, p. 559, Ephraim Pagitt, Heresiography, or a Description of the Hereticks Sprang up in these Later Times (London, 1645), p. 78; Burrage, I, 218-219.

[13] Gardiner, pp. 181ff, 270-271, 316ff; cf. Strype, 3.1, pp. 63-65.

corruptions of the carefully wrought dialectics of orthodox Reformed theology. The details of this interaction belong to a separate study. Here, we are concerned only to provide something of an historical introduction to New-England Antinomianism, in particular, to note that the Hutchinsonians' more startling notions, together with certain more subtle ones which they shared with John Cotton, are strongly reminiscent of, if not in fact of a piece with, unorthodox notions more or less concurrently abroad in England.

Anne Hutchinson's claim to immediate revelations places her in that company of Christian prophets (not infrequently female) who appear in all ages of the church, professing peculiar intercourse with the Holy Trinity. It also places her in the more localized company of prophetesses and female preachers of the English sectarian underground of the first half of the 17th century.[14] Others of her errors, while more obscure, were equally scandalous. Before the Boston church, she was charged with denying the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. On the first count she apparently held that the soul is by nature mortal, dying like an animal's, but is rendered immortal by Christ's redemption, which occurs at his coming to the soul in union. On the second count she denied that Christ is united to fleshly bodies, so that the body that dies cannot be the same one that rises. Instead, when we believe, we receive a new, spiritual body. She did

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[14] V. Church Trial, in Hall, p. 380; Edwards, Gangraena, I, 84; cf. Thomas Shepard, Parable of the Ten Virgins Opened and Applied, in Works (New York, 1967), II, 500.

not question the fact, but only the manner, of resurrection, affirming that we shall "rise in Christ Jesus" in the sense of Romans 6.1-7. This assertion, however, coupled with her peculiar construction of 1 Thess. 5.23 (as Christ's coming to the soul in union, rather than his coming at the last judgment), caused the elders, not unjustly, to suspect her of "hold[ing] no other resurrection but...union to Christ Jesus," i.e., the experience of conversion instead of the resurrection of the last day.[15] The source of these notions is not clear, though one may note the instance of a man tried in 1611 before the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield who maintained "that the soul doth sleep in the sleep of the first death as well as the body and is mortal touching the sleep of the first death, as the body is"; and the fact that the disciples of Henrik Niklaes were reported to hold that "the resurrection of the body is a rising from sin and wickedness," and that the resurrection of the dead spoken of by Paul, 1 Cor. 15, and the "prophecy...'O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?' is fulfilled in them, and they deny all other resurrection of the body to be after this life."[16]

At the examination before the Court, Mistress Anne charged that the elders "were not able ministers of the New Testament," because they "had not the seal of the Spirit," and

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[15] Hall, pp. 354-356, 357-364.

[16] Burrage (1912), I, 218-219. Pagitt, pp. 78, 76, quoting John Knewstub, Confutation of the monstrous...heresies taught by H.N. (London, 1579), and Edmund Jessop, A Discovery of the Errors of the English Anabaptists (London, 1623), resp.

so were like the apostles before Christ's resurrection, that is, they were "ministers of the letter and not the spirit." Accordingly, they were unable to preach a covenant of grace, but only a covenant of works.[17] The latter allegation she based on 2 Cor. 3.6, identifying the "letter" which "kills" with the "letter of the gospel," instead of the "letter of the law."[18] Herein she confirmed Dudley's charge that she held that "the gospel in the letter and words holds forth nothing but a covenant of works."[19] In the biblical text, Paul distinguished between the dispensation of the Mosaic law, with its requirement of obedience, and the dispensation of the Spirit, in which life is given apart from the law; subsequent theologians traditionally applied the letter-spirit distinction to the demands of the law and the gracious promises of the gospel, respectively. Mrs. Hutchinson, consonant with her professed intimacy with the Holy Spirit, distinguished between scripture as such, and the Spirit's immediate testimony, which is at least equally, if not more, authoritative.[20] This sort of distinction was not uncommon along the sectarian fringe of the Reformation. John Eaton, an English "antinomian" of note, maintained a distinction between literal and spiritual knowl-

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[17] Hutchinson, II, 370-375, 382. At the church trial she was charged with holding that "the Disciples were not converted at Christ's death." Hall, p. 353.

[18] Hutchinson, II, 376.

[19] Ib., 371, 375-376; cf. Short Story, Error No. 9, in Hall, p. 221.

[20] Cf. Ib., Error No. 40, Hall, p. 230.

edge, the former consisting "exclusively in the word and doctrine from heaven," the latter in "a joyful spiritual feeling knowledge of the excellency of Free Justification."[21] Henrik Niklaes was reputed to have held "that the Bible was not the word of God, but a signification thereof. And that it was but ink and paper: but the word of God was spirit and life"; and the synod at Cambridge condemned as erroneous the assertion that all doctrines, revelations, and spirits "must be tried by Christ the word, rather than by the word of Christ."[22] The latter notion plainly sets the second Person of the Trinity against the word of scripture, and the former tends in that direction.

In the course of her personal confession (which brought the proceedings of the Court to an abrupt conclusion) Anne Hutchinson remarked that when, in England, the Lord had discovered to her the true ministry of the New Testament, "he left me to distinguish between the voice of my beloved and the voice of Moses, the voice of John Baptist and the voice of antichrist."[23] This distinction of voices, together with her notion (noted above) that the apostles (not yet being "sealed"

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[21] John Eaton, The Honeycombe of Free Justification by Christ Alone (London, 1642), pp. 215-216, A3vo (ital. added); cf. pp. 228-229.

[22] Strype, 2.2, 289; cf. Wilkinson (1579), Biiivo.; Short Story, Error No. 61, Hall, p. 235.

[23] Hutchinson, II, 383; cf. Short Story (Hall, p. 272), "from which time the Lord did discover to me all sorts of ministers, and how they taught, and to know what voice I heard, which was the voice of Moses, which of John Baptist, and which of Christ; the voice of my beloved, from the voice of strangers...."

by the Spirit) preached a covenant of works until Christ's ascension (after which the Spirit was given, and with Him the New Testament in its fullness), is suggestive of a three-fold dispensationalism. In this connection one may note John Eaton's distinction of three times of the church, viz., of the Law, of John the Baptist, and of the Gospel. The first was the time of the legal rigor of the Old Testament, showing that nothing pleases God but the perfect righteousness demanded by his law, and driving men, by the burden of it, to long for the Messiah. The time of John the Baptist came between that of the law and that of the gospel, and extended until the death of Christ. It was distinguished in that while John "revealed sin terribly by the law," yet by

> pointing to the Messiah now come and present; he did not only preach and seal by baptism a fuller exhibiting of the glory of free justification; but thereby also the former legal severity that then lay upon the children of God and the school-master-like government [of the law] began to slack and cease.

In the time of the gospel, for those who are "by faith grown to full age," the schoolmastership of the law is entirely ended. Formerly it drove the people of God "as little children to obedience by fear, thereby veiling and darkening free justification," but now they partake of the righteousness of Christ, making them "perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely."[24]

It is not intended here to establish a direct historical connection between Anne Hutchinson and the sectaries noted

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[24] Eaton, pp. 98ff, 102-106, 112.

above, nor are the parallels indicated to be pressed without further research. They suggest, however, that certain of her notions were not directly deduced from the tenets of Reformed orthodoxy as articulated by the Puritan clergy, but instead had their roots (as the elders of the Bay were not unaware) in the substratum of popular English heresy.[25] All of the parallels noted, moreover, involve an opposition between the members of the Trinity and the instrumentality of created things, viz. of fleshly bodies, human souls, the biblical word, and the preaching of the law.[26] More immediately pertinent to the subject of this study are the allegations that Mrs. Hutchinson held

> "That sanctification can be no evidence of a good estate in no wise."
> "That the first thing we receive for our assurance is our election."
> "That union to Christ Jesus is not by faith."
> "That there be no created graces in the humane nature of Christ nor in believers after union."
> "That we have no grace in ourselves but all is in Christ and there is no inherent righteousness in us."
> "That an hypocrite may have the righteousness of Adam and perish."[27]

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[25] V. Shepard-Cotton correspondence, in Hall, pp. 28f, and Church Trial, ibid., p. 380. The same could be said of other errors catalogued by the synod, and/or attributed elsewhere to Mrs. Hutchinson, as praying only when the Spirit moves, not praying for forgiveness of sins, not doubting one's assurance even though one sins, that union with Christ precedes faith, and that faith is belief in one's own justification. V. Short Story, Errors No. 49, 34, 64, 32, 42, 68, 20, 37, 21; Johnson, Wonder-working Providence, pp. 93, 94f; Church Trial, in Hall, p. 374. Cf. notes 12 and 13, above.

[26] Others, even more strikingly expressive of the same opposition, may be adduced from the synod's catalogue of errors, and from the errors charged against Anne Hutchinson. V. below, passim.

[27] Church Trial, in Hall, pp. 352, 374-375.

The significance of these expressions will, it is hoped, become evident in the course of the ensuing discussion. They will be seen to be rooted in a fundamental opposition between created and increated being, and between nature and grace, which was characteristic of the antinomian outlook. This opposition found expression in a practical opposition between divine agency and gracious ends (viz., the Spirit's work, union with Christ, and assurance of justification), on one hand, and created means (e.g., preaching of the law, attendance on the ordinances of worship, and obedience to the law as rule), on the other,--an opposition which led antinomians severely to circumscribe the divine modus operandi in the distribution of eternal rewards. For federal theologians, the covenant of works was the paradigm of this modus.

In 1646, a Puritan heresiographer noted that all the traditional Christian heresies might then be found in England, but that scarcely any of them could be found in its pure state. Instead, there was a sort of pool of heretical notions in the land, into which people dipped in breadth and depth according to their fancy.[28] The same, apparently, had been true, in a measure, since the accession of Elizabeth, though less visibly. The founding of New England tapped this reservoir of sectarianisms, drawing numbers of settlers from the eastern counties and from London, two areas long noted as the principal habitats of English sectaries. It is perhaps not coincidental that there were more Lincolnshire and London men

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[28] Edwards, I, 16.

in Boston than elsewhere in the Bay, and that New-England antinomianism was concentrated almost exclusively in the Boston church.[29] It was to Boston that Anne Hutchinson went from Alford in Lincolnshire, led by the Spirit in the track of John Cotton, who had been for twenty years pastor in Old Boston in "Holland of Lincolnshire," an area subsequently known for sectarian activity.[30] It was the Boston church which recognized in John Wheelwright, of Spilsby, Lincolnshire, a kindred spirit, and sought to make him a colleague of Cotton, to the embarrassment, if not the eventual displacement of John Wilson, whose theology was of another temper. It was in the house of John Cotton that young Henry Vane, of subsequent religious and political notoriety, sought lodging on his arrival in Boston (rather than that of Gov. Winthrop), siding with Cotton and the Hutchinsonians in the ensuing controversy.[31] When, in the excitement of the Civil War, sectarianism and heresy flourished in Old England, the "Antinomianism and Familism" of New England was looked upon as an early instance of the same phenomenon, i.e., as part of a tradition lately come to full flower.[32]

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[29] V. Emery Battis, Saints & Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony (Chapel Hill, 1962), p. 255; and note 11, above.

[30] Edwards, I, 84.

[31] Larzar Ziff, The Career of John Cotton: Puritanism and the American Experience (Princeton, 1962), p. 115.

[32] V. Pagitt, pp. A2rto-vo., 89, 101; Robert Baillie, A Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time (London, 1645), pp. 61ff.

(b) "Preparation for Salvation"

In his journal, Winthrop declared that the basic points at issue in the Antinomian Controversy were two: that the person of the Holy Ghost dwells in the justified, and that sanctification is no evidence of justification.[33] Recent historiography, largely under the influence of Perry Miller, tends to regard the central issue, with both Cotton and the Hutchinsonians, as "preparation for salvation," viz. the notion that while only the elect are saved, and saved only by God's gracious action, there is still "the need to 'prepare' oneself so as to facilitate the operation of God's saving grace when and if it should come."[34] The basic tension is seen to lie between "Arminian" tendencies into which the ministers are alleged to have been falling unawares, and "the Calvinist dogma of divine omnipotence and human helplessness," or, as Winthrop put it (in the idiom of the time), "the doctrine of free justification."[35] Winthrop's theological sensitivities were not always reliable (Thomas Shepard discovered considerable ineptitude in W.'s initial efforts to refute the HutcHinsonians).[36] Yet, in terms of contemporary theological discussion among English and New-English Puritans, there is a plausibility about Winthrop's assessment which is lacking in the case of "preparation," despite much writing on the subject.

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[33] Winthrop, Journal, I, 195f.

[34] Morgan, Puritan Dilemma, p. 136.

[35] Ibid.; quoted, Hall, p. 17.

[36] Winthrop Papers (Boston, 1919), III, 326-332.

To say this is not to deny that preparation for conversion was a subject of New-England theological controversy, but it is to question the place of the issue in the Antinomian Controversy itself. One hesitates to controvert an august tradition, and one must immediately confess the substantial debt owed Professor Miller by anyone concerned with the study of American Puritanism. What follows is based on the observation that in the chief sources for the controversy, the subject of "preparation" in the sense indicated appears with considerably less prominence than it does in secondary literature, if, indeed, it figures as a major issue at all.

Miller introduced New-England "preparationism" in the context of the national moral reformation called for by the Synod of 1679, treating it as a creation primarily of the second generation, faced with the growing problem of maintaining a godly commonwealth.[37] The founders had committed New England to a "national covenant" with God, in which divine favor was contingent upon external obedience by the citizenry to the divine will revealed in scripture. Such obedience, in both moral and religious duties, did not require personal regeneration, and could be enforced by a godly ruling minority through the agency of the civil law. As the unregenerate majority increased, however, so did the problem of enforcing the obligations of the national covenant. Not everyone, when he got to

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[37] Perry Miller, "'Preparation for Salvation' in Seventeenth-Century New England," Journal of the History of Ideas, IV (June, 1943), 253-286; The New-England Mind: From Colony to Province (Boston, 1961), ch. iv.

Massachusetts, proved as zealous for "pure ordinances" and "godly walking" as he had seemed across the water. In response to what they regarded as a diluting of the impulse to public and private piety, the New-England clergy fastened upon a notion long current in Puritan theology, viz. that there are preparatory conditions antecedent to (though not causative of) conversion, in the pursuit of which would-be saints are required to exert themselves. From the pulpit the ministers conducted a hortatory campaign, urging their hearers to preparatory moral endeavor, with the incidental, but desirable, effect that, in striving to discern and avoid their sins, they would perforce fulfill the terms of the national covenant. Long before 1679 there appeared a distinctive New-England doctrine of preparation (for which Thomas Hooker was chief spokesman), maintaining the ability of the unregenerate individual to act in ways significantly related to, though not necessarily productive of, conversion. In 1636-37, exhortations to earnest moral endeavor were not strange to the ears of New-England congregations, and the Antinomians were vociferous against human activity in relation to regeneration. And Hooker, the arch-"preparationist," shared with Peter Bulkeley and Thomas Shepard the leading role at the synod at Cambridge which dealt with the Antinomians. Accordingly, Miller found preparation to be the underlying issue of the Antinomian Controversy.

On the face of the matter, the inference is logical. The ministers <u>were</u> insisting upon the necessity of human activity both before and after conversion,--and with the social impli-

cations which Miller pointed out. Shepard, writing when antinomian issues were still alive, examined in detail the stages of "conviction" and "compunction" which necessarily precede the infusion of faith in conversion. The Spirit, by means of terrors of the law and contemplation of God's just wrath upon sin, brings a man to see and to abhor his own sinfulness, and to separate himself from it. Christ will never enter a soul which has not come off from its favorite lusts. He will redeem the ungodly, but not while they are actively and comfortably ungodly. Conviction and compunction differ from repentance for sin, which is a fruit of faith and a mark of the truly godly, but they are nonetheless gracious works, accomplished by the Spirit's power, and not by unregenerate agency alone. The instrument by which the Spirit separates men from their sins is the trenchant preaching of the obligations, of performance and punishment, which are theirs under the law. A man who is sold wholly under sin is utterly unable to free himself by any power of his own. Only a creative act of God can accomplish it. Yet even the most vile sinner is susceptible, by the Spirit's operation, of conviction and compunction by means of the preaching of the law.[38]

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[38] Thomas Shepard, The Sound Believer, in Works (New York, 1967), I, 117ff, 130-157, 175-182; cf. Parable of the Ten Virgins in Works, II, 137f, 139f, 201; cf. Thomas Hooker, The Application of Redemption (London, 1657), pp. 2, 5ff, 15f, 30, 306f, 309. H. is distinctive among New-England divines in describing "compunction" in terms usually reserved for "repentance," understood as a fruit of saving conversion. The Antinomians objected to preaching "any preparation work, by shewing men what the law requires," on the ground that the law and the prophets, and any preaching out of them, are antithetical to the true gospel (Johnson, Wonder-Working Providence, p. 94).

The ministers were also stressing conscientious attendance on church ordinances, by both regenerate and unregenerate. The divine commandment, "repent and believe the gospel," is binding upon all who hear it, and attendance on ordinances, and earnest meditation on gospel truths, is the ordained means by which converting grace comes to sinners, and quickening grace to saints. God has instituted certain "means," of which the preaching of law and gospel is the chief, by which elect sinners are made actually regenerate, and by which additional grace is conveyed to those already converted. All are enjoined by divine command to attend upon such means, and it is only through them that regenerating grace (in the ordinary course of God's working) may be obtained. Speaking to the regenerate, the ministers urged them to exertions of obedience to divine commands, in conformity with the rule given in scripture by which the saints are to walk, and to put forth and increase the power of sanctifying graces within them, in preparation for Christ's coming in glory. Shepard's Parable of the Ten Virgins and Bulkeley's Gospel Covenant (both composed of sermons from ca. 1636 to ca. 1640) abound in appeals to the unregenerate to get those "frames" which are essential to Christ's coming into the soul, and to the saints to make their saintliness visible and to perfect it.[39]

The Antinomians, for their part, were thoroughly opposed

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[39] Shepard, Parable, pp. 49f, 57, 61ff, 93ff, 115, 165, 289, 529; Bulkeley, The Gospel Covenant, or the Covenant of Grace Opened (London, 1646), pp. 44-47, 48, 93f, 113, 128, 117f, 255, 320.

to human activity, as such, both before and after conversion, with negative implications for moral and religious endeavor in both cases. It was in this that they were said to "open such a fair and easy way to heaven, that men may pass without difficulty," and which, accordingly, many men chose to travel by.[40]

> For, if a man need not be troubled by the Law, before faith, but may step to Christ so easily; and then, if his faith be no going out of himself to take Christ, but only a discerning that Christ is his own already, and is only an act of the Spirit upon him, no act of his own done by him; and if he, for his part, must see nothing in himself, have nothing, do nothing, only he is to stand still and wait for Christ to do all for him. And then if after faith, the Law no rule to walk by, no sorrow or repentance for sin; he must not be pressed to duties, and need never pray, unless moved by the Spirit: And if he falls into sin, he is never the more disliked of God, nor his condition never the worse. And for his assurance, it being given him by the Spirit, he must never let it go, but abide in the height of comfort, though he falls into the grossest sins that he can. Then their way to life was made easy.[41]

So Thomas Weld, in 1644, characterized antinomianism on both sides of the Atlantic, repeating what was perhaps the predominant charge against it, viz., that it pandered to the natural moral indolence of the unregenerate. For by denying the preparatory role of the law to drive men first to despair and then to Christ, and by denying the necessity of repentence for sins committed after regeneration, Antinomians were seen to be saying that a man might have Christ and keep his favorite lusts, too.[42]

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[40] Winthrop, Short Story, Preface, in Hall, p. 203.

[41] Ibid., pp. 203-204.

[42] E.g., Shepard, Parable, pp. 59, 192, 203f, 401f.

At this juncture, several matters may be noted.

1. In the chief documentary sources for the New-England Antinomian Controversy explicit concern with moral activity prior to conversion, as a point of controversy, is relatively inconspicuous.[43] Miller noted this circumstance, describing preparation as "the hidden issue" in the controversy, partly because it was not yet a "consolidated doctrine" and so "figured deceptively as an incidental term in the technical disputations," and partly because it was so theologically loaded (being suggestive of Arminianism) that "the authorities made every effort to play it down."[44] The first point is more probable than the second, but by no means certain.

Among the Reformed, English Puritans were peculiarly concerned about the nature of personal regeneration, largely, it may be suggested, for ecclesiological reasons. Determined to create covenanted churches of apparently godly (if not actually regenerate) men, Puritans were compelled to elaborate in detail the order and evidences of the various phases of the "application of redemption" by which a sinner, fit only for damnation, is translated into an estate of blessedness in this life and the life to come. The preparatory function of the preaching of the law was taken up under this rubric. It is

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[43] The chief documentary sources are here taken as comprising the exchanges between Cotton and the ministers, published in Hall (1968); the testimony of Anne Hutchinson in Court and church, in ibid.; Cotton's New Covenant (1654); Bulkeley's Gospel Covenant (1646); Shepard's Parable (1659); and the "catalogue of errors" in the Short Story, in Hall.

[44] Miller, From Colony to Province, p. 157; "'Preparation for Salvation'," p. 266.

true that New-Englanders, especially Hooker, devoted considerable attention to non-saving preparations antecedent to conversion proper, yet they shared this interest with their English brethren.[45] (Hooker's position was established before he left England.)[46] In any case, in stressing "legal" preparation to receive Christ, Puritans were but elaborating a commonplace of orthodox Protestant theology, viz. that the law, in the time of the gospel, is of "pedagogical" utility, causing men to despair of their own righteousness and so driving them to seek Christ's righteousness for their reconciliation.[47] It is possible that the doctrine of preparatory works antecedent to conversion was not fully developed in 1637. It is at least equally possible, however, that it was developed, that it was current to the point of requiring no special mention, and that, as far as New England was concerned, it was not the critical point at issue with the Antinomians. In regard to the alleged unorthodox implications of preparation, it is of course possible that a sort of voluntary censorship was exercised during, or after, the controversy, though the rela-

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[45] E.g., William Pemble, Vindiciae Gratiae, a Plea for Grace, in Works, 4th ed. (Oxford, 1659), pp. 81ff; Richard Sibbes, "Lydia's Conversion," in Works (1862), VI, 522f, and A Bruised Reed and a Smoking Flax, ib., I, 44f; John Preston, The New Covenant, pp. 394f, 407-410, and The Breastplate of Faith and Love, pp. 49-52; William Ames, Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof (London, 1643), Bk. II, ch. iv. Cf. William Perkins, Golden Chain, I, 69f, 78f, 84f, and Exposition upon Galatians, II, 242, 248ff.

[46] Hooker, The Unbeliever's Preparing for Christ (London, 1638), derived from sermons delivered before H.'s departure.

[47] V. Perkins, Exposition upon Galatians, p. 213; Ames, Marrow, I.xxvi, 12.

tive lack of explicit mention of the subject in the variety of material assembled by Hall (which may be taken as representative) would suggest otherwise. It is at least equally possible that the issue was not as "hot" theologically in 1637 as it may have been some sixty years later, when Samuel Mather was noting, "As your conviction is, such your faith is: as is the preparation work, such is the closing with Christ," and when his father, Cotton Mather, was urging, "Tis many ways advantageous for an unregenerate man to do as much as he can.... Try whether you can't give that consent; if you can, 'tis done."[48]

2. Cotton, in The New Covenant (also composed of sermons from the time of the controversy), matter-of-factly discusses necessary preparatory states prior to union with Christ, which correspond to Shepard's "conviction" and "compunction." God ordinarily (i.e., in the normal course of his regenerating activity) works a double preparation on his elect. By a "spirit of bondage" under the law, he makes them conscious of their sinfulness and cuts them off from worldly delights, and by a "spirit of burning" in the face of his wrath he cuts them off from all hope of grace and from all comfort of their own legal works. To the question, Whether there be saving preparations before union with Christ, Cotton replied in the negative. There are no saving works in the soul before union. There are preparations, but they are not

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[48] Quoted, Miller, From Colony to Province, pp. 66f.

saving.[49] This was precisely the point made by John Norton in The Orthodox Evangelist, which, as Miller noted, was a theological systematizing of preparationist notions.[50] In his discussion of the preparatory role of the law vis-a-vis the covenant of grace, Cotton was altogether orthodox; and in his "Rejoynder" to the elders, references to works "preparing" and to works (such as humble waiting for Christ) antecedent to saving faith, appear in the course of discussion about discerning justification, rather than about "stages" of conversion.[51]

3. The New-England clergy in general (at least until about 1700), unlike certain of their opponents and subsequent commentators, were yet able to distinguish comfortably between theological doctrines of divine predestination and irresistible grace in respect of salvation, and metaphysical doctrines of determinism. That a man was predestinated to a certain end, and saved by grace alone, did not affect his nature as a rational, willing agent. It meant, not that he could "do nothing" significant in the physical and moral realms of daily life, but that he was impotent to effect his own salvation. The decree of election is hid in the mind of God, so that none may know in this life that he is of the reprobate. To con-

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[49] New Covenant, pp. 19-21, 24, 52-54; cf. "A Sermon Delivered at Salem in 1636," in Ziff, ed., Cotton on the Churches, pp. 49, 51, 60-61.

[50] Norton, The Orthodox Evangelist (London, 1654), chs. vi-viii; cf. Shepard, Sound Believer, p. 170.

[51] E.g., "Rejoynder," in Hall, pp. 87, 91; cf. The Way of Life (London, 1641), p. 405.

clude such is to risk sinning against the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, it was insisted, all men are obliged as long as they live to consider themselves susceptible of regeneration and to attend diligently upon the means of grace.[52] The utility of this conclusion for promoting exertion in religious duties is obvious. It does not, however, necessarily indicate an Arminian drift, if by "Arminian" one means attributing to human agency an efficacy (as opposed to an instrumentality) unto justification. "Arminian" is taken here as referring to the notion that the fallen will is able, of its own power, to consent to God's offer of forgiveness in Christ, which act is the effective condition of justification. This assertion was roundly denied by Puritans on both sides of the water.[53] The corrupt will is utterly incapable of such a consent. Denial of human efficacy unto justification, however, is not inconsistent with the assertion that human activity, in the exercise and use of those means ordained by God for the dispensing of saving grace, is instrumental in the application of redemption. If justification is by faith, and if faith comes by hearing the preached word, then it is only by going to meeting and attending on the words of the minister that a man may be saved. The minister disposes over no supernatural power to convert, nor does diligent hearing in any way merit saving grace; yet preaching and hearing are the normal instruments by

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[52] E.g., Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 82-85.

[53] V. Norton, Orth. Ev., p. 166; Hooker, Applic. of Redempt., pp. 301-304.

which the Spirit works faith in the heart.[54]

Exhortation to attend on the means, moreover, does not necessarily imply a "concession" to human agency at the expense of saving grace. It belongs to man's nature, as created, to be a willing agent. He is, qua man, a "cause by counsel," i.e., he propounds to himself ends and chooses means for their accomplishment. In this respect, man's nature remains the same before and after regeneration. The fallen will is indeed bound in its range of options by sin. It is incapable of willing (by its own power) to obey God, and wholly unable to will God as its greatest good and last end. But it is not simply impotent. The regenerate will, freed from sin's bondage, is able to will things that it could not before; and in effectual calling the will is enabled (by the power of grace alone) to make a genuine consent to the offer of grace in the gospel. Were it otherwise, a man's nature as man would be violated. Predestination and the sola gratia imply no inherent opposition between grace as such and human activity as such.[55] A man has liberty to go to the church or the tavern, and he is to be urged to choose the former, for the safety of his soul.[56]

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[54] V. Shepard, Parable, II.xiv, xv; Hooker, Applic. of Redempt., pp. 285f.

[55] V. Perkins, A Treatise of God's free Grace and Man's free Will, in Works (1626), I, esp. 722-731; Pemble, Vindiciae Gratiae, pp. 110ff; Ames, Marrow, I.x.2, xii.44; Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 74-77, 114f; Hooker, Unbeliever's Preparing, pp. 101f.

[56] Hooker, Applic. of Redempt., pp. 142f, cf. 306f; Unbeliever's Preparing, pp. 120-123. Cf. Sibbes, The Excellency of the Gospel Above the Law, in Works (1862), IV, 234.

Insofar as this view prevailed in 1637, it is unlikely that the issue of activity preparatory to conversion had immediate Arminian overtones, and therefore was not as loaded (and hence not something to be alluded to rather than stated) as Miller suggested. If this is the case, then while human activity was indeed an issue, even the issue, in the Antinomian Controversy, it was so in a sense other than the status of "unregenerate doings" (to borrow a phrase from later New-England controversy) vis-a-vis saving conversion. Even Cotton could speak of non-saving preparations, and Norton, who was a "preparationist," was also a thoroughgoing predestinarian.[57]

4. The matter is complicated somewhat by the fact that "preparation" in Puritan discourse may refer to two quite different things. There is "preparation for conversion," i.e., for the translation of an individual from a state of apostasy to a state of grace. Preparation in this sense covers those states of conviction, compunction, and humiliation by which a sinful soul is made ready to receive regenerating grace. The doctrinal locus is, in effect, an elaboration of the pedagogi-

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[57] Orth. Ev., chs. iv, v.
Norton (1606-1663) was educated at Peterhouse, Cambr. (B.D. 1627). Under the influence of Jeremiah Dyke, Epping, Essex, he became a Puritan, scrupling to accept a benefice offered him by Sibbes. For a time he was a private chaplain in Essex. In Oct., 1634, he joined Shepard in an unsuccessful attempt to reach New England. Solicited by Edward Winslow as teacher for the Plymouth church, he sailed thither, arriving in Oct., 1635. The following spring he removed to Boston, and in 1638 became teacher at Ipswich. N. played a major part in formulating the "Cambridge Platform" in 1648, and was twice officially deputed to represent the Colony in theological controversy. N. was the foremost theologian among the first generation in New England.

cal use of the law.[58] There is also "preparation for salvation." Technically, salvation differs from regeneration, referring to the glorification of the saints in heaven at the last day.[59] At conversion an individual undergoes a qualitative change, actually entering upon the blessedness of heaven, but only imperfectly. Between the beginnings of holiness and its perfection in glory lies a life of struggle with the remnants of sin, during which the converted are expected to prepare themselves, by diligent exercise of graces received, for presentation before their exalted Lord. It is in this sense that the term appears, for example, in Shepard's Parable of the Ten Virgins. For all its stress on human activity in attending on means and performing holy duties, this work is thoroughly eschatological in its orientation. It is an extended exposition of the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25.1-13), some wise, some foolish (but all virgins), waiting to meet the bridegroom. And it is addressed explicitly to the church, comprising regenerate and unregenerate (but all visible saints), who are preparing to meet Christ at his second coming. "Preparation" is a recurrent motif, but always in relation to the imminent coming of Christ, and primarily in the sense of exercising, and therein perfecting, the habits of grace infused in regeneration. Where the image of the "heart prepared" appears, it is explicitly referred to regenerate

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[58] V. Hooker's exhaustive treatment of "preparation for conversion" in The Application of Redemption.

[59] V. Leigh, System of Divinity, p. 490, citing William Twiss; cf. Ames, Conscience, II, iv, Marrow, I.xxvi.12.

souls preparing to meet their heavenly Lord.[60] In the course of his exposition, Shepard touches points relevant to the Antinomian dispute, but it is not obvious from his responses that he is defending "preparation" in Miller's sense of the term.[61]

5. Statements by and about Antinomians, both English and New-English, are frequently as applicable to the place of human activity in believing, in discerning of justification, and in works of sanctification,--all of which have to do with the nature of regeneration itself,--as they are to moral endeavor antecedent to conversion. This is true of the passage from Weld's preface, quoted above (p. 95), where only the reference to the work of the law pertains to a condition antecedent to faith. Anne Hutchinson's hostility to human activity certainly covered works of preparation before conversion, but that this was the focus and/or sum of her concern is less certain.[62] Equally, if not more, important issues, from theological and practical viewpoints, are raised explicitly in the rest of the passage from Weld.[63]

If the ninety-odd errors and improper expressions collected by the synod in 1637 be taken at face value, the majority of them fall, more or less, into four categories, concern-

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[60] Parable, pp. 27ff, 96ff, 112, 345; Pt. I, ch. viii, sect. 1 and ch. xi; II.viii.1, xix, ix.1-2.

[61] Ibid., pp. 203-206, 225f, 275-281, 279f, 401f, 503.

[62] Cf. Miller, From Colony to Province, p. 57.

[63] Cf. Leigh, p. 539.

ing (a) the nature of justifying faith, (b) the nature of sanctification, (c) the nature of the Spirit's indwelling in the believer, and (d) the means of knowing one's estate. This observation is confirmed by examination of the rest of the documents. The explicit issues (which receive the most extensive treatment) concern the relationship, in the order of regeneration, between faith, union with Christ, justification, and sanctification; and they coalesce in the question of the validity of works of sanctification as evidence of a justified estate. This question involves the matter of the activity of supernatural graces in the regenerate, and the matter of the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the believer.[64] What Cotton meant, when he said there are no saving preparations before union with Christ, was that no activity of infused faith could be a prior condition of the covenant of grace, and that no activity, attributed in scripture to sanctifying grace (such as "humble waiting for Christ," or "thirst for righteousness"), taken alone, could be an evidence of justification (even on scriptural authority).[65] It is possible (reading "between the lines") that preparation in Miller's sense was a crucial issue on the broader "practical" front, as being integral to the preaching of conversion. For the participants, however, the explicit broader issue, at the practical and

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[64] Cf. Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., A4rto.; Cotton, Sixteen Questions of Serious and Necessary Consequence, in Hall, pp. 46-47; Shepard, Parable (preface), p. 6, and note 12, above.

[65] E.g., Bulkeley & Cotton on Union with Christ, in Hall, pp. 34-42; Cotton, "A Boston Conference," in Hall, pp. 175ff, 192ff.

theological level, was that of knowledge and assurance of one's justified estate, an issue which turns on how the nature of regeneration is understood, not on what one is alleged to be able to "do" to "facilitate" regeneration.

Fundamentally at issue, one may suggest, was the question of what could be known objectively, without transcending the orders of creation, about the saving work of the Spirit in an individual. Cotton was protesting that a man could not conclude from the presence of distinctive sanctifying works in himself that he was justified, apart from an immediate testimony of the Spirit to his heart, on the ground that created works and creaturely activity are, as such, subordinate in all aspects of regeneration to the Spirit's unconditioned, immediate operation. The Hutchinsonians held the same, and on the same ground denied the utility of the law to bring men to Christ, and asserted that divine favor after regeneration is not contingent upon obedience to the law. English and New-English Antinomians struck not only at the traditional second and third uses of the law, but also at orthodox opinion regarding the nature of saving faith, the conditionality of the covenant of grace, and the ground of personal assurance. These, rather than the place of preparatory works as such, were the issues on which the Antinomian controversy in England was initially joined in the 1640's.[66] Regarded in this light, Winthrop's assessment of the issues in New England may be

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[66] E.g., Stephen Geree, The Doctrine of the Antinomians ...Confuted (London, 1644); Thomas Gataker, God's Eye on his Israel (London, 1645).

taken as substantially correct.

This conclusion has implications not only for analysis of the Antinomian Controversy itself, but also for aligning its principals in the history of New-England theology, as well as of Protestant theology generally. John Cotton and Anne Hutchinson have been represented, and English Antinomians characteristically represented themselves, as champions of the "Reformation principles" of free grace and free justification against illegitimate exaltation of human activity. John Eaton cribbed liberally from Luther on Romans and Galatians, and Cotton sprinkled his writings (and nightly "sweetened his mouth") with morsels of Calvin. (Where Laudian Anglicans were the object of attack, this claim was not illegitimate, but Antinomians were not overly scrupulous in distinguishing between Puritans and Laudians, especially after 1642.) In terms of the "Arminian-Calvinist" polarity noted above, Cotton is taken as the first of a line of New-England preachers,--among whom Jonathan Edwards was "the most eminent,"--who reasserted the principles of divine omnipotence, human helplessness, and free grace.[67] In a measure this is true, but only in a measure.

It is apparent that by the 1630's, in England, the phrase "free justification by grace alone" (and variants) was acquiring the character of a party slogan. Often it appears less as a conscientious appeal to the cardinal principles of the Prot-

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[67] Morgan, Puritan Dilemma, pp. 136-137.

estant Reformation than as the rallying cry for a growing number of nonconformists of various colors and temperatures, whose common tendency was toward establishment of the absolute reign of the Holy Spirit, to the ultimate subordination of creaturely activity, created works, and biblical word.[68] In New England, the phrase served (though not always) as the positive polemical counterpart of the charge of "preaching," "being under," or "going aside to," a "covenant of works." Not infrequently, it may be suggested, claims for the essential Protestantism of the Hutchinsonians, in contrast to their detractors, have been accepted with insufficient scrutiny.

The New-England clergy were less directly influenced by Calvin's theological determinism than by the formulations of Reformed theologians who were concerned that the orders of creation, including man's nature as rational agent, not be violated by the divine omnipotence (though they were nonetheless predestinarian, and nonetheless devoted to the sola gratia). Calvin's categorical assertion of human helplessness

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[68] V. Gardiner, Reports of Cases, pp. 184f, 316-320; John Eaton, Honey-comb, b2rto, 115; Tobias Crisp, Christ Alone Exalted (London, 1643), pp. 210-214, 301. Eaton (d. c. 1642) was reputed the literary father of English antinomianism; Crisp (d. 1643), through his literary remains, occasioned some seventy-five years of controversy among English Dissenters. V. also John Ball, A Treatise of Faith (London, 1631), Pt. I, passim, and esp. sec. vii; and John Downe, A Treatise of the True Nature and Definition of Justifying Faith... (Oxford, 1635), passim. These works suggest a tendency on the part of some, in the interest of the free and absolute character of saving grace, to conceive of justifying faith not as a gracious act of consent to the promise of redemption given in the gospel, but as subjective assurance of one's prior election and/or justification. So conceived, faith is not the condition of entry into the covenant of grace, but a consequence of it.

in respect of salvation, and of the Spirit's unconditioned operation in regeneration, was especially congenial to Cotton's theological temperament; and in his exchange with the ministers he drew on the Genevan to show that works have nothing to do with justification, including the evidencing of it. It should be noted, however, that the question at issue was not so much that of meriting justification, whether by human works alone, or by works aided by grace, or of fulfilling required conditions before conversion, but rather of the incompatibility of justification and works altogether. The Spirit necessarily, Cotton asserted, witnesses to the fact of our justification "without respect to a work," that is, "without sight of any work of ours."[69] In this, the bent of his interest lay in the direction of Anne Hutchinson. The same is true of his understanding of justifying faith, by which he meant that faith whereby we believe ourselves to be justified, and its accompanying assurance.[70] For Cotton, such faith was contingent upon the immediate witness of the Spirit, apart from which a man may not take settled comfort even from the promises of the gospel.

In contrast, if Luther on Romans and Galatians be archetypal of Protestant understanding of assurance, then Thomas Shepard was closer to the fount of Reformation piety than was Cotton, for Shepard's conception of faith and assurance is

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[69] Rejoynder, in Hall, p. 87.

[70] Cf. 2nd error attributed to Anne Hutchinson, p. 87 above; and v. below, ch. 5(b).

reminiscent of that of the German reformer. To those who complained that they doubted of their estate because they had not been conclusively sealed with the Spirit in an immediate testimony (the desideratum of the Hutchinsonians), Shepard replied, You have the promises of the gospel; go then to Christ in them, trusting to him who makes them, and believing that they are made to you. In believing, you are justified; and in believing, you have assurance of it. The emphasis falls on trusting in God to accomplish what he has promised in his word.[71]

Examination of the evidence suggests less that the elders of the Bay were crypto-Arminians, undermining the sola gratia by slight concessions to unregenerate human agency, than that Cotton was a crypto-familist, on the brink of invalidating creaturely agency altogether, of both biblical word and regenerate work, in the name of the unconditioned, uncreated agency of the Trinity. In his understanding of the relationship between faith and union with Christ, and between the Spirit and graces in the believer, Cotton was travelling in the direction of the Hutchinsonians and was expressing opinions which shortly thereafter appeared at the heart of English Antinomianism. If, in fact, the ministers were exalting human activity at the expense of saving grace, their fault lay, as far as the controversy was concerned, in stressing works of sanctification as legitimate and necessary evidence of justification. They

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[71] Shepard, Sound Believer, pp. 197f, 214ff; Parable, pp. 81f, 127f, 140-143; cf. Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 48, 306f, 309f.

were willing to argue that a man might take his first assurance of justification from, and found his assurance on, his awareness of regenerate works in himself. Yet on this point, if Edwards' orthodoxy was unimpeachable, so was that of the ministers, for the crucial issue for Edwards amidst the enthusiasm of the Great Awakening, viz. the proper identification of the truly regenerate, was also at issue between the ministers, Cotton, and Mrs. Hutchinson in 1636-38. And on this point, Edwards accepted the solution articulated by Shepard and his colleagues, namely that the regenerate are to be discerned, not on their own testimony of an immediate word of the Spirit to their hearts, but by universal obedience, in conscience and conversation, to the will of God revealed in scripture.[72]

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[72] Edwards, Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, in Works, 8th ed. (New York, 1856), III, 182f, 202f.

Chapter 5: John Cotton and the Preëminence of the Spirit

Anne Hutchinson and John Wheelwright charged the elders of the Bay Colony, save one, with "preaching a covenant of works." This charge was false. At the same time, whatever other factors separated the Hutchinsonians from their opponents among the New-England clergy, there were in fact theologically significant differences between them. These differences focused on the question of the extent to which God, in the work of regeneration, employs created means and respects man's nature as a reasonable creature. Is entry into the covenant of grace conditional upon an act of faith, a genuine consent on man's part, to which he is brought through diligent attendance on the preaching of law and gospel, meditation on the scriptures, and earnestness in prayer? And are works of sincere obedience to the moral law evidence that a man is indeed regenerate, such that he may draw from them assurance of salvation? The Hutchinsonians thought not. They held, rather, that the Spirit must first whisper directly to a man's soul that he is in the covenant, must show him his name "writ in the book of election." Then he believes, and has assurance. The man himself need only "wait for Christ," and for the Spirit.

In this and the succeeding chapter we shall sketch the position of the New-England "errorists" respecting the nature of the work of regeneration, and the manner in which that work may be known to an individual. In order, we shall consider the nature of, and relationship between, faith, justification,

and sanctification, the significance of so-called "conditional promises," and the means of evidencing one's estate in grace.

(a) Place of Cotton

The Hutchinsonians left behind no significant literary deposit. At best their opinions are accessible at second hand, largely in works originating with their detractors. John Cotton's position, therefore, is important, for he alone, among the elders, was exempted from the Hutchinsonians' criticism; and he wrote at length on the controverted issues. Accordingly, Cotton is the major source for the dissenting position in the New-England Antinomian Controversy.

Cotton began on one side of the controversy, and ended on the other. He was not the source of all of Anne Hutchinson's distinctive notions, either directly or by deduction on her part; yet the two were substantially in agreement respecting the nature of regeneration, whatever the source, or sources, of their ideas. Cotton's intellectual and professional qualifications were equal to those of his colleagues, yet he sided in doctrine, and up to a point in practice, with those of the unlearned who found that Mistress Anne "preache[d] better Gospel than any of your black-coats that have been at the Nineversity."[1] Cotton emerged from the uproar to become a spokesman for New England's peculiar church polity, yet shortly after his arrival in Boston he revealed a theological

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[1] Johnson, Wonder-working Providence, pp. 95f, an allusion linking theological learning with Nineveh, Babylon, and the Whore thereof (for which observation I am indebted to Mr. Ernest B. Lowrie).

spirit different from that of the other elders, a spirit which Mrs. Hutchinson, Vane, and sundry of the Boston church recognized immediately as their own. The controversy formally began, not only with Wilson's speech to the Court, but also, about the same time, with a series of unpublicized inquiries by the ministers, in which Cotton was clearly suspected of holding questionable theological views. Until the fall of 1637, he publicly sided with the Hutchinsonians in ecclesiastical matters; and at the examination of Mrs. Hutchinson he sought to qualify both the testimony against her, and her more extreme assertions.[2]

The synod at Cambridge concluded with a confrontation, on five controverted points (concerning the order of regeneration, the nature of faith and sanctification, and the evidencing of justification) between Cotton and Wheelwright on one side, and the rest of the elders on the other. Faced publicly with solid opposition, Cotton publicly conformed.[3] His compliance was regarded by some at the time as pro forma only, and when Anne Hutchinson was heard before the Court, he was himself put on the spot. Ten years later, he was still maintaining his old, ante-synodical opinion, at least in respect

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[2] Hutchinson, II, 381ff, 386f, 391. In Dec., 1636, C. joined with the Boston church in censuring Wilson for his speech at the Court (Winthrop, Journal, I, 204f); in March, 1637, together with Vane, Wheelwright, and the ruling elders of Boston, he boycotted the ordination of Peter Bulkeley and John Jones at Newtown, "because they accounted these as legal preachers, and therefore would not give approbation to their ordination" (ibid., pp. 212f).

[3] V. ibid., I, 233f; cf. Cotton, The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared (London, 1648), pp. 40-47.

of the relationship between faith, justification, and union with Christ.[4] Winthrop, representing the government, was willing to regard the affair as settled with the exposure and expulsion of Mrs. Hutchinson and her followers. As long as Cotton remained a non-political minority of one, his presence and his views were tolerable (though Thomas Shepard continued, until 1640, to preach on issues raised at the synod, and Peter Bulkeley saw fit, in 1644, to allow publication of his sermons from the same period).[5]

When Cotton died, in 1652, he was eulogized as a patriarch of the new Israel in the American wilderness. Association with sectaries in the 1630's, however, clouded his reputation. When Robert Baillie, in the 1640's, sought to discredit New-England congregationalism, he seized upon Cotton's support of the "antinomian" and "familistical" Mrs. Hutchinson, as an example of the heresy implicit in the New-England "way" of church government.[6] Cotton did good service in defense of the church polity of the Bay Colony. For official theological polemics, however, the Colony relied on Hooker and Norton.[7] Cotton's

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[4] Shepard (Diary) in Ziff, ed., Cotton on the Churches, p. 23, nt.; Hutchinson, II, 386ff; cf. Hall, p. 381; Cotton, Way Cleared, pp. 43-46, 49f.

[5] Shepard, Parable of the Ten Virgins, "To the Reader," in Works, II, 8; Bulkeley, Gospel Covenant, "Epist. Ded.," and "To the Reader."

[6] A Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time (London, 1645), pp. 55ff. B. was one of the Scottish Commissioners at Westminster, and an intransigent Presbyterian.

[7] Hooker's A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline was sent to England by the ministerial Assembly of July, 1645, in answer to Samuel Rutherford's The Due Right of Presbyteries (London, 1644). About the same time Norton was deputed to

positive contribution to New-England ecclesiastical life was eminent ground for eulogy. Historians, however, beginning with his earliest biographer, have been at pains to mitigate his connection with the Hutchinsonians.[8]

The reasons for Cotton's association with the Boston "errorists" are rendered somewhat elusive by the fact that he retained affiliations on both sides of the controversy. The more moderate of the Massachusetts clergy never ceased to regard him as a brother, and his position as teacher of the Boston church was never publicly questioned. It has been suggested that Cotton undertook to oppose his colleagues, in 1636-1638, out of heroic devotion to what he regarded as a crucial principle of Protestant Christianity. It has also been suggested that Cotton became easily lost in clouds of theological speculation, and so was taken in by the Hutchinsonians. The latter suggestion is the more probable.[9] Cotton was not, by temperament, a sectary in the same way that Anne Hutchinson, by temperament, was. Her more extreme utterances, about direct revelations, the mortality of the soul, and the resurrection, were contrary to Cotton's judgment and spirit.

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write a statement in behalf of Independency, viz. Responsio ad totam questionem syllogem a...Guilielmo Apollonio (London, 1648). In 1652, N. was commissioned by the General Court to reply to a tract by William Pynchon on the Atonement.

[8] E.g., Norton, Memoir of Cotton (ed. Pond), p. 76.

[9] E.g., Everett Emerson, John Cotton (New York, 1965), pp. 112-125; Ziff, Career of Cotton, ch. iv, and pp. 150f; Ziff, ed., Cotton on the Churches, p. 23; cf. Norton, Memoir of Cotton, pp. 68f; Johnson, Wonder-working Providence, pp. 93f; C. Mather, Magnalia (1855), I, 267f.

Had it been otherwise, he would have departed speedily for that haven of New-English sectaries, Rhode Island. Differences in temperament notwithstanding, however, Cotton in fact shared certain key theological views with the Hutchinsonians. In the published remains of his discussion with the ministers, he appears as an articulate, if often guarded, spokesman for theological notions which lay at the heart of the controversy.[10] They were, moreover, notions which allied him with that contemporary strain of non-conforming English opinion which stressed the freeness of justification and the primacy of the Spirit's operation to the point of overruling the activity and the natural liberty of the human creature.

(b) Justifying faith and the nature of sanctification

According to orthodox Puritans, regeneration occurs instantaneously in time. It is a qualitative change, a quantum jump, as it were, from a state of total subjection to sin to a state of grace in which sin no longer completely dominates a man, and he begins in a real sense to live the "life of heaven." In the instant of regeneration, however, several things are accomplished, which are causally related (i.e., related "in order of nature"). Analyzed into its components, regeneration encompasses (in order): 1) infusion into the soul of a new vital principle; 2) an act of faith (arising from this principle) accepting the offer of Christ's right-

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[10] Esp. Cotton, Sixteen Questions of Serious and Necessary Consequence (London, 1644); "The Elders Reply" thereto, and "Mr. Cotton's Rejoynder," all available in Hall.

eousness; 3) justification, in which God (on account of Christ's righteousness) absolves a man from the guilt of sin; 4) adoption, in which a man acquires the status of a "son" of God, with all the perquisites thereof; 5) sanctification (one of the perquisites), in which, by infusion of supernatural graces, a man becomes in himself actually holy. At point (3) a man is said properly (in order of nature, not of time) to have entered the covenant of grace. At issue between Cotton and the elders was the question of the nature of faith and sanctification, and of their relationship, in the above order, to justification and entry into the covenant of grace. Cotton placed the act of faith after justification, and treated it as foremost among the graces of sanctification. For this reason, Cotton's views on faith, justification, and sanctification are here taken together.

(i) The nature of justifying faith

It will be helpful to begin by noting the various meanings of "faith" in Puritan discourse. There are at least four: 1) "historical faith," q.e. intellectual apprehension of doctrinal truth, shared by the unregenerate and devils; 2) "miraculous faith," q.e. temporary adherence to Christ wrought by God apart from ordinary means, which ceases when the extraordinary influence is withdrawn; 3) "faith of assurance," in which the soul is convinced of its justified estate; and 4) "justifying faith," which (in respect of its effect) unites to Christ and thereby justifies, and which (in respect of its form) is called "faith of adherence and dependence." Only justifying faith may properly be called "saving," for it

alone forms the critical juncture between the destitution of the humbled sinner and the fullness of Christ's riches of grace; and only justifying faith can be the foundation of true assurance.[11]

Orthodox Puritans took Paul's phrase (Rom. 3.28), "A man is justified by faith," in a causal sense, regarding faith as properly the condition of entrance into the covenant of grace. As the condition of the covenant on man's part, faith is necessarily an act, for man is by nature an agent. It is the soul's going-forth to take hold of Christ offered in the gospel, and the soul's giving itself to Christ so offered. The act of faith is distinctive in that it is a gracious act. No man can truly believe from his own power, or by his own agency, but only as the Spirit, infusing a supernatural principle enables him to do so. Nor is the act of faith, the Spirit enabling, at all meritorious of justification. It is merely an arbitrary condition imposed by God when he set up the system of covenants. If a man will have a gift that is freely offered him, he must put out his hand and take it.[12] Faith is ontologically prior (prior in order of nature) to union with Christ, for it is the movement of which union is terminus ad quem. Justification, which follows from union, is nonetheless "by faith alone" and "by grace alone," for the Spirit, who

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[11] V. Shepard, Parable, p. 317; Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 289f.

[12] E.g., Peter Bulkeley & John Cotton on Union with Christ, in Hall, pp. 36, 39; Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 265, 298; Ames, Marrow (1642), I.xxvi; Leigh, Body of Divinity, pp. 490f.

works gratuitously, is (in scholastic terminology) the "efficient" cause of union with Christ, and faith, without which there is no union, is the "instrumental" cause of it. Given the Pauline phrase, the New-England ministers read, We are justified by faith as the instrument by which we receive Christ unto union, of which justification is the consequence. For Cotton, however, "justification by faith" offered rather more of a problem, for he excluded by definition the possibility of a gracious act antecedent to union with Christ. Accordingly, he altered the relationship of faith and union.

The elders of the Bay distinguished, in accepted scholastic fashion, between the habit of faith and the act of faith. By the first they meant the principle (or power) of faith infused by the Spirit, in receipt of which the soul is passive. By the second they meant the act of faith, put forth from the habit, by which the soul believes on Christ. Both were understood to be antecedent conditions of union with Christ. Cotton retained the distinction between habitual and actual (i.e., active) faith, but he made habitual faith coincident with union, and active faith consequent upon it. By habitual faith he meant the passive faith by which the soul is fitted to receive Christ. By active faith he meant the faith by which the soul becomes aware of its justified estate and consciously believes on Christ.[13] Active faith is subordinate to union with Christ, rather than antecedent to it. Cotton

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[13] V. Winthrop, Journal, I, 233f, pt. 1; Cotton, New Cov., p. 55, cf. 26f.

called habitual faith "a condition consequent" to union, meaning a state of affairs flowing from union. This was a somewhat different sense of "condition" than that intended by the elders. Active faith Cotton reduced to apprehension of the fact that one is in truth justified by Christ, making it a gift of grace flowing from union.[14]

Cotton's understanding of the place of infused (habitual) and active faith emerges from a written exchange with Bulkeley, from 1636 or 1637. Bulkeley asserted that faith wrought in the soul must be "effectual faith, to make the bonds of union on our parts," i.e., must actually bring us into union. Cotton replied that faith was indeed effectual, but in the sense of rendering men capable of receiving Christ. The soul receives Christ, but only "as an empty vessel actually [but not actively] receives oil poured into it." Habitual faith is "of an emptying nature, emptying the soul of all confidence in itself and in the creature, and so leaving and constituting the soul an empty vessel...but full of Christ."[15] Bulkeley responded that faith so conceived gives no form to the union, "for it doth nothing till the union be made: which yet can never be true union without true causes." Faith, he allowed, as a formal cause, gives being to the union in the same way that "anima rationalis gives being to the man." Cotton

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[14] Ibid., pp. 55ff, cf. 25f, 28; Cotton's Rejoynder, in Hall, p. 94; Bulkeley & Cotton on Union, Hall, pp. 37f, 40.

[15] Ibid., pp. 36ff, 40; C. drew the same distinction in regard to faith considered as an instrumental cause of union (Way Cleared, p. 42).

replied that faith is active, and a formal cause, but it acts on the man himself, rather than on Christ unto union. Faith dwells in the man as a form in the formatum, conferring on him capacity to receive Christ. Faith, so considered, is not the formal cause of union with Christ, as giving being to the union, but, rather the formal cause of the Christian. "As forma dat esse formato, so doth faith to a true faithful Christian making him alive in Christ, and so a member of him."[16]

In this exchange, Cotton was trading on an ambiguity in the definition of the formal cause. Aristotle spoke of it as that which makes a thing distinctively what it is, neglecting altogether the question of the cause of its being. Medieval scholastics remedied the deficiency by making existence inseparable from essence. Form was regarded as conferring being, as well as distinctiveness, on matter, which apart from form is only potency. It is in this sense that Bulkeley used the term in reference to union with Christ: faith gives being to the union, "as the reasonable soul gives the being to the man." Cotton, characteristically, altered the terminology of the discussion: "Anima rationalis makes a man to be what he is, a man.... So faith maketh a Christian man to be what he is, a true Christian, and so united to Christ and a member and heir of his...." The Spirit works faith in a man, and faith works in him an actual fitness to receive Christ, in which union consists, though faith is not yet "active to believe

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[16] Bulk. & Cot. on Union, p. 38.

on Christ."[17]

Cotton was willing to admit a mutual receiving on the part of God and man, in respect of coming unto union, and a giving on God's part, but no giving on man's part prior to union. The latter, however, was precisely the point at issue. It was, moreover, a theological point (as distinct from a pastoral one), touching the integrity of the human creature, as by nature a rational agent, vis-a-vis the creative power of the Spirit. This matter concerned Cotton less, however, than upholding (in the language of a later era), the qualitative otherness of justifying grace.

> [T]hough God hath ordained faith to help the soul to close with Christ, yet not to make up our union with Christ by actual believing on him, but on our parts to say Amen to what God hath done, and to receive what God hath given and wrought in us.... We must be good trees before we can bring forth good fruit,... If then closing with Christ be a good fruit, we must be good trees before we can bring it forth. And how we can be good trees, before we be engrafted into Christ, we must look for it in Aristoteles (unintel.): for it is not revealed in the Gospel of Christ.[18]

Union with Christ in fact must precede active closing with him; indeed it precedes all activity of faith: this was the premise of all of Cotton's arguments respecting the place of faith in the order of regeneration.[19] Cotton would concede to the soul a habitual receiving of Christ, but not an active going to Christ or taking of Christ. Such would be to get Christ when we were yet dead in sin, which implies a freedom

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[17] Ibid., pp. 38f.

[18] Ibid., pp. 39f.

[19] V. New Cov., p. 15.

of the will to close with Christ prior to regeneration. This Cotton was utterly unwilling to allow, even if the order be but logical, and the will be liberated by infusion of a habit of grace by the power of the Spirit.[20] Given Paul's phrase, he read, We are justified by faith, i.e., faith, being by the power of the Spirit in the soul habitually, makes us Christians, that is, in union with Christ, whence we are justified, and believe on Christ as our justifier.

For orthodox Puritans, active faith, as the condition of the covenant of grace, held the crucial place in the order of regeneration and was accorded an appropriate distinctiveness among the graces of the regenerate. Cotton, in effect, restricted active faith to that "faith of assurance" by which the regenerate consciously believe that they are justified. Active faith is related to justification, not in any antecedent, causal sense, but as something consequent, in which the believer apprehends the prior fact of his justification. The believer's conscious turning to Christ is the first and foremost fruit of union. This was, in effect, to make active faith, as a good fruit flowing from the good tree, a gift of sanctification. It was also consistent with the opinion charged upon Anne Hutchinson, that "the first thing we receive for our assurance is election." "Justifying faith" is not faith that justifies, but faith that reveals to us that we are justified.[21]

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[20] Bulk. & Cot. on Union, pp. 40f.

[21] P. 87, above. Rejoynder, in Hall, pp. 85, 91f, 93ff (hereafter cited with page no. in Hall); Bulk. & Cot. on Union, pp. 40f; New Cov., p. 93.

In effectual calling, Cotton maintained, the Spirit works faith in the soul to receive Christ passively into union. Thereupon, the soul enjoys communion with Christ, receiving faith to believe on him, and assorted other spiritual graces. From Christ "we receive grace for grace, Joh. 1.16: the like faith, hope, love, zeal, meekness, patience, etc." Faith, "as a qualification inherent in us and deriving holiness from Christ in all our duties,...is a part of sanctification." The acting of these graces is in no way necessary to union, which is constituted, rather, by the Spirit's working of them in us.[22] Cotton allowed activity to faith in the receiving of graces, in the sense that once a man is engrafted into Christ, faith "acts upon Christ and strains by itself to receive Christ for any help unto further union," but he would not admit any activity of faith in closing with Christ.

(ii) The nature of sanctification

Cotton distinguished himself from his colleagues by conflating faith and sanctification. He also differed from them in his understanding of the nature of sanctification itself. English and New-English Antinomians denied the inherence of sanctifying graces in the regenerate, maintaining that such graces subsist in Christ alone, and are in the believer only as Christ and the Spirit are in him. (The orthodox reversed the relationship, affirming that Christ and the Spirit are in the believer in and through inherent graces.) For this reason

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[22] Ibid., pp. 27f; Rejoynder, p. 111; Bulk. & Cot. on Union, pp. 37, 40f.

Hutchinsonians, when urged to pray that graces of sanctification might be found in them, replied, "We must not pray for gifts and graces but only for Christ." For the same reason, exhorted to stir up and put forth such graces as might be in them, they responded,

> Here is a great stir about graces and looking to hearts, but give me Christ, I seek not for graces, but for Christ, I seek not for promises, but for Christ, I seek not for sanctification, but for Christ, tell me not of meditation and duties, but tell me of Christ.[23]

On his part, Cotton did not explicitly deny the inherence of graces in the believer, but he came very close, making both their existence and their activity in the regenerate entirely a function of the Spirit's operation.

In the orthodox scheme, the regenerate sinner undergoes a double alteration, a relative and a positive. In justification, Christ's righteousness is imputed to him, so that God no longer regards him as under condemnation. His sinful nature is unaltered, but his relationship to God,--God's estimate of him,--is changed. Christ's righteousness is not subjectively in the believer (it remains in heaven in Christ), but he enjoys the benefit of it in virtue of his relation to Christ by faith. In sanctification, created graces, new principles of action, are positively infused into the believer, making him literally a new creature. He is changed in his very nature, becoming subjectively (actually) holy. The Spirit begets and preserves these graces, or habits, of sanctification, and they

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[23] Short Story, Error No. 23, "Unsavory Speech" No. 5; cf. Errors No. 15, 7; Church Trial, Hall, p. 378.

derive their power from his continued sustenance; yet such graces have power of their own, in virtue of which saints are able to act holily. The orthodox were at pains to make clear that the sanctified do not themselves dispose over graces apart from the Spirit's operation; they obey not in the strength of "their graces" which they have received, but always in the "strength of Christ" whence they have received them. Yet the orthodox were equally concerned to maintain that graces of sanctification do actually inhere in, and are active in, regenerate persons.[24]

Cotton retained the language of a two-fold change in the regenerate, in the sense just indicated, and also the notion of infused habits of grace. But he so emphasized the dependence of sanctifying graces on Christ's power as to make their existence in the regenerate, in effect, merely relative; and he flatly denied that gracious habits might work in the regenerate of their own power.[25] As in the case of faith and justification, so in sanctification, Christ is the one real center of activity and efficiency. All spiritual gifts exist first, and in their fullness in Christ, whence they are derived by the Spirit's agency to such as are in union with Christ. Activity in and from the creature in respect of spiritual things (like divine commands) is as inadmissible after regeneration as it is before. Christ is the root of holiness, which has no life save as it flows from this root. Given this

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[24] E.g., "The Elders Reply," in Hall, ad q. 9.

[25] New Cov., pp. 31f; Rejoynder, pp. 101ff.

premise, Cotton was constrained to modify the traditional understanding of sanctification, placing the effective center of gracious activity outside of the believer.

So concerned was Cotton to diminish the activity of the creature in regeneration that he could speak of sanctification as itself an imputation, as springing from "the imputation of Christ's righteousness" even as "corruption of nature springs from the imputation of Adam's unrighteousness." Cotton meant that as men stand by nature in relation to Adam as head of the race, and so share the consequences of Adam's sin without sharing in Adam's sinning, so the Christian, standing in relation to Christ as head, shares Christ's righteousness, without of himself acting righteously. That Christ's righteousness is imputed to men in this manner for justification, was a standard orthodox affirmation. Cotton, however, tended to construe imputation of Christ's righteousness as extending to sanctification as well, and to take literally the phrase "Christ is our sanctification." The righteousness in question is primarily Christ's, and is in the regenerate relatively, i.e., as they stand related to Christ.[26]

The New-England elders affirmed that the Holy Spirit is the "procreant and conservant" cause of sanctification, begetting and maintaining grace in the soul. Cotton agreed, but complained that they allowed nonetheless an unduly independent existence to graces. He made much of the phrase (originally

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[26] New Cov., pp. 34f; cf. Leigh, Body of Divinity, pp. 512, 516f.

Pauline) "we live, yet not we, but Christ liveth in us." The new man is a tree of righteousness, of which Christ indwelling and working by his Spirit is the root, and this root is not only the procreant and conservant cause of sanctification, but is also the matter of it. "Is the root no material of the tree?" Paul introduces Christ not only as begetting and sustaining spiritual life in him, "but as jointly concurring with him in every act of spiritual life as much as himself, yea more; I live (saith he) yet not I but Christ liveth in me, Gal. 2.20, and again, to me (saith he) to live is Christ. Both the being and the activity of sanctification is Christ's own work. The righteousness of sanctification is not properly ours, but Christ's, indeed is Christ, who (after 1 Cor. 1.30) is "made...our righteousness and sanctification." Graces in us "become active and lively not of themselves, but as Christ is active in them and puts forth himself in them day by day."[27]

So far as any gifts of sanctification are in a man, Cotton declared, he is to look for his holiness "to be perfect in Christ," and is to look to Christ for continual supply of holiness. In this way we "make Christ our sanctification," going on not in the strength of what we have received, "but in the strength of Christ."[28] Cotton took "the strength of Christ" in this connection quite literally. Without Christ's continuous activity in the saints, their gifts would fly away away as did Adam's and leave them naked, though Adam's gifts

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[27] New Cov., pp. 35, 159; Rejoynder, pp. 102ff, 144.

[28] New Cov., p. 150.

were perfect. In this respect sanctification is the fruit of faith, faith being the medium by which the soul, "looking to Christ," receives passively, and actively seeks, life from him. Faith in Christ, "which derives renewed life and power, will and deed and all from Christ," actuates sanctification, "so that faith doth not concur in duties of sanctification as an external efficient but as a formal ingredient in every holy Christian duty."[29] This, Cotton allowed, is what the Apostle describes as the life of faith.

Saints are also said to live by the strength of Christ, because their graces have no inherent power to act in them, or in virtue of which saints themselves are able to act holily. His colleagues asked Cotton, "Whether a Christian be not further active after regeneration, than before it?" Cotton replied that a Christian is not at all active before regeneration, but allowed that after it, "acted upon we act." The relationship, however, is wholly functional, our activity being the dependent variable. Apart from the immediate activity of Christ's Spirit, the saints are quite helpless.[30] It does not belong to the nature of sanctifying graces to be active apart from additional help from Christ to set them to work, and there is, accordingly, no possibility of any "active power in us of ourselves through gifts received." With this asser-

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[29] Ibid., pp. 146ff; Rejoynder, p. 101, cf. 103. Ital. added.

[30] Sixteen Questions, Hall, p. 47 (hereafter cited with page no. in Hall); Rejoynder, p. 143; New Cov., pp. 147, 158f.

tion Cotton distinguished himself from the tradition of Reformed Orthodoxy as it was received in New England. "Come to any holy duty, and it is the Holy Ghost that leads you along, and acts you.... It is the Spirit of God that moves us to any good work, and that acts the gifts of his grace in us."[31] The antinomian implications of this manner of speaking are obvious. Both in the form of speech and in the substance of the idea, Cotton revealed his affinity with English and New-English antinomianism.[32]

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At the time of the Antinomian Controversy, Cotton's theological posture was governed by a conception of the order of regeneration in which union with Christ was the primary,

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[31] Ibid., pp. 101f, 144f, 147; cf. Sixteen Questions, p. 51.

[32] Cf. the 4th, 5th, and 6th errors attributed to Anne Hutchinson, p. 87, above. A clue to the significance of the 6th is given in the exchange between C. and the elders over the 9th of the Sixteen Questions. The question was whether "Christian sanctification" consists in the "immediate acting of the Spirit" or in infused habits which are "contrary to corrupt nature,"--in effect, in "the image of God in Adam renewed in us." C. construed "image of God" as "sanctification," and replied that Christian sanctification includes faith in Christ and repentance from sin, which Adam's sanctification did not, and springs from "the indwelling power of Christ by his Spirit" "to act and keep holiness in us," which Adam's did not. Technically, the image of God in Adam consisted in the power to perceive God's will clearly and to obey it willingly, out of love for God, and in virtue of a gracious power. (V. Thomas Shepard, Theses Sabbatticae, in Works [New York, 1967], III, 97.) C. altered the terms of the question slightly; and, as he interpreted it, an hypocrite indeed might attain to the righteousness of Adam before the fall, and yet fail of that indwelling and immediate acting of Christ's power which is distinctively "Christian sanctification." In orthodox terms, however, this proposition was absurd (v. below, chs. 7(c) and 8(b)). Sixteen Questions, p. 51; Rejoynder, pp. 99-104.

supreme, and overruling moment. Transition from the state of apostasy to that of grace begins with, and is effected in, the operation of the Spirit by which the sinner is brought into union with Christ. After the fact, apprehension that one is indeed in union with Christ is contingent upon the same operation. This apprehension is equivalent to conscious faith, and arises solely on the Spirit's testimony. Creaturely agency and creaturely mediation, in accomplishing and evidencing justification, are wholly subordinate, if not irrelevant. Cotton, therefore, was hostile to any suggestion that human agency might fulfill a condition, or perform any obedience, which might be related causally to justification. His New-England brethren stoutly denied that a man might merit justification by an act of faith. They had no intention of compromising the sola gratia in favor of unregenerate activity. Unlike Cotton, however, they were not constitutionally opposed to conditions in the order of regeneration, nor did they regard human agency as incompatible with divine grace. Cotton, in contrast, was so thoroughly committed to the absolute priority of the Spirit's efficient operation in and after union with Christ that he was suspicious even of the language of law, command, and condition in connection with regeneration. From such things, gospel and grace are qualitatively other. The basic opposition for Cotton was not between "nature" and "the supernatural" (in a modern sense), or even between "corrupt nature" (of fallen man) and "divine grace," but, what was more radical and more serious, between created being, as such,

and the increated activity of the Trinity.[33] This opposition affected fundamentally his understanding of the believer's relationship to Christ, making it impossible for him to regard faith as the condition of the covenant of grace in the same way that it was so regarded by his colleagues. This same opposition also affected Cotton's understanding of the nature of sanctification, making it equally impossible for him to allow sanctifying graces genuinely to subsist in the regenerate.

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[33] E.g., Rejoynder, pp. 85, 87.

Chapter 6: John Cotton on the Evidencing of Justification

Cotton's hostility toward creaturely activity extended also to the matter of knowing whether one is in fact justified. Must a man wait until the Spirit whispers that he is of the elect? Or is there a power of godliness in the regenerate (in graces of sanctification), which manifests itself in discernible ways, by means of which an anxious saint may conclude that he is truly justified, even though he has not yet "seen his name writ in the book of life"? Cotton held the former. The instrumentality of created things is everywhere subordinate to, and dependent upon, im-mediate intelligence from the Holy Spirit. The discussion between Cotton and his colleagues focused on the question whether works of sanctification may be an evidence of justification apart from prior direct testimony of the Spirit. In this chapter we shall examine Cotton's answer, with passing reference to the position of the elders.

The transformation which occurs in regeneration, Cotton maintained, is so exalted an event that it can be discerned only by an equally exalted means, viz. by the Spirit's own testimony. He rejected, therefore, the notion that a man could perceive his regeneration in his own behavior by means of his mental faculties. The saints remain invisible, even to themselves, until the Spirit apprises them of their sainthood. Denial of an objective, empirically discernible criterion of sainthood followed from Cotton's rejection of the orthodox understanding of the order of regeneration, and of the orthodox conception of inherent sanctification. For Cotton, daily

works of sanctification depend on the presence of conscious faith, by which the saints derive power from Christ for such acts. Conscious faith, however, depends on the Spirit's testimony that one is united to Christ and justified. It is impossible, therefore, to conclude from sanctification to justification. Moreover, since sanctifying graces do not subsist in the regenerate, the regenerate cannot perceive the presence of such graces in themselves. There is, therefore, no basis for such a conclusion. Cotton, in effect, discarded the conceptual framework by means of which the elders were able to make their case in a doctrinally legitimate manner. This enabled him to shift the discussion from an evidential connection[1] between sanctification and justification to a causal connection, which, incidentally, permitted him to sound very Protestant, while making the elders sound less so, to the uninitiated. This tendency to change the question is apparent in Cotton's treatment of "absolute" and "conditional" promises, to which we now turn, and in his discussion of the particular point of evidencing justification, with which this chapter concludes.

(a) Priority of absolute promises

"An absolute promise of free grace" was one of Cotton's slogans. He meant by it a biblical promise of redemption without mention of any condition, such as Acts 10.23, 44, and

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[1] I.e., of the form: a is the cause of b
where b is
there is a
where a = justification, and b = sanctification.

16.31, where the listeners, "upon hearing the promise of remission (or justification) unto faith, they received both faith and justification, and the evidence of both, all together."[2] (The Spirit, in other words, conveyed to the listeners, --who were already justified,--on hearing the promise, faith to believe that they were justified, and confirmed their faith by appropriate testimony.) Absolute promises are contrasted with "conditional" promises, i.e., promises of blessedness to "gracious qualifications" in Christians (as Mt. 5.3, "blessed are the poor in spirit"), and to "evangelical obedience" (as "love to the brethren").

The elders maintained that conditional promises, in which the New Testament abounds, are intended by God as aids in discerning sainthood. Gracious qualifications and evangelical obedience are both works of sanctification. Both spring from inherent sanctifying graces, the presence of which presupposes a justified estate. Accordingly, the ministers argued, an individual may take assurance of his justification from the presence in himself of works of sanctification to which biblical promises are made or implied. In so doing he is not "closing with Christ" as he does in entering the covenant of grace, but merely drawing a reasonable conclusion from empirical evidence interpreted in the light of scripture. Cotton refused this line of argument on the ground that it was based on a false understanding of the order of regeneration. He also rejected it because it involved conditions, created

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[2] Way Cleared, p. 43.

works, and commands, which he regarded as being incompatible with the free grace of the covenant.

Cotton allowed considerable scope to conditional promises in their proper place.[3] That place, however, is not in discerning justification, because it is impossible to come to Christ (i.e., to come to believe that one is justified) in promises to conditions pre-existent in us. The covenant of grace has nothing to do with conditions, so that closing with Christ can be in absolute promises only. (Here Cotton shifted the discussion from evidencing justification to the causes of it; the ministers were not talking about closing with Christ, but with being sure that one has in fact closed.) Conditional promises, moreover, are not made to elect individuals directly, but first to Christ, and the conditions are fulfilled in him. The elders insisted that such promises are also made to individuals, and argued that, since the qualifications are wrought by, and the promises made from, God's grace freely, conditional promises are as free as absolute ones. Cotton replied that they are free, not because they are freely wrought in us, but because they are perfectly fulfilled in Christ, to whom the promised blessings properly accrue, whither we must go in faith to receive them. Conditional promises are of grace, not because God works the condition in the soul, but because they are to, in, and from Christ, and only derivatively to and in the believer. The ministers saw nothing amiss in taking active faith as a prior condition of the covenant of

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[3] V. New Cov., pp. 87-100.

grace, since active faith arises from a gracious principle freely infused by the Spirit. Cotton would not allow prior conditions in the order of regeneration at all, not even gracious conditions.[4] At issue was not so much the freeness of the promises (as the phrase "going on in a covenant of works" might seem to suggest), as it was whether created graces have anything at all to do with either the being, or the initial apprehension, of justification.

God gives himself to the soul, Cotton declared, only in promises; he comes "riding (as it were) upon the chariot of a promise." But he does so, in the first instance, only in the offer of Christ "in an absolute promise of free grace, without any qualifications mentioned."[5] God unites himself to the soul as a father to a child, or a husband to a wife, but

> did you ever know a true real marriage made in a conditional promise? Doth a man say to his wife, 'If you prove a loving and kind wife, then, I will be thine husband'?

(To which the elders might legitimately have replied, No, but "if we should ask a woman married to [a]...husband, how she knows such a one is her husband, she would manifest it by those peculiar acts, or works, or manifestations of a husband to her.")[6] To expect that if we carry ourselves in such and such a way, God will be ours and we his, and, if not, he will

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[4] Rejoynder, pp. 98f, 137; Boston Conference, in Hall, p. 186; "Elders Reply," in Hall, ad q. 13, cf. Rejoynder, p. 97; cf. Cotton, "A Sermon Delivered at Salem, 1636," in Ziff, ed., Cotton on the Churches, p. 53; New Cov., pp. 86f, 96f.

[5] Ibid., pp. 43f, 92; Rejoynder, p. 91.

[6] New Cov., p. 93; cf. Rejoynder, p. 93; Shepard, Parable, p. 214.

cast us off, dishonors the covenant of grace. Christ is offered in a free promise which requires neither antecedent faith nor works, though it requires and will produce both as consequents. To maintain otherwise is prejudicial to the covenant of grace. The promise is also received as freely as it is given. The soul yields itself entirely to God's disposing, imposing no conditions upon God's grace. Christ is given for our misery, not our worth, and it is contrary to the tenor of the covenant "to lay the weight of our interest in it, upon any condition by which we might plead our right unto it."[7]

With all of this the ministers could readily agree, though it was not to the point. Cotton, however, insisted on talking about the causes of justification, and the manner of entering the covenant of grace, rather than about the evidencing of justification, which presupposes that one is already in the covenant.

Cotton applied his dictum about the unconditionality of the promises of the covenant as much to the evidence of justification as to the causes of it. God reveals free grace freely, viz. in an absolute promise. It is essential, therefore, not to close with promises "before we have Jesus Christ in them." To employ promises to gracious qualifications "to give you your part in Christ," and to think that "the Lord did give you himself gratuitously in a conditional promise," are "aberrations from the covenant of grace." If God should reveal his grace in a promise to a condition presupposed in us, in pro-

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[7] Rejoynder, pp. 91ff; New Cov., pp. 43ff, 94.

portion as "the condition is stood upon before grace [is] revealed [by the Spirit], so much is grace veiled and obscured in the revelation of it."[8] All blessings and promises are the legacy of Christ, which is not conferred until Christ himself be given. Those who are thirsty and poor and long to be filled, are made so by some former assurance that all riches are unconditionally laid up in Christ. Neither is their first assurance from their poverty (i.e., from a gracious qualification). Rather, their poverty directs them to go to Christ to be made rich. Wherefore, "if you know that you are in Christ, you may know that the promises are yours, otherwise you shall not be able to know your right in Christ by your right in the promises."[9]

(b) Visibility of saints

The question of the nature of sanctification, together with the question about conditional promises, was vital to the discussion, for upon it turned the question of how the saints can be discerned. The elders of the Bay maintained that justification, as a relative matter, might not always be immediately evident to the regenerate. Sanctification, however, as something positive, is more easily perceived, since it consists of inherent active graces which manifest themselves in identifiable ways. Because the justified are inevitably sanctified (from Rom. 8.29f), the reverse also holds, and whosoever

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[8] Rejoynder, p. 95.

[9] New Cov., p. 103.

finds in himself works of true sanctification may reasonably conclude that he is in fact justified.[10] On his part, Cotton was committed by the received theological tradition to a positive change in the regenerate, by which they are distinguished from hypocrites. At the same time, he was constrained by his personal bias in favor of the Spirit's overruling operation to render this change invisible to creaturely eyes, even to the enlightened eyes of a regenerate conscience.[11]

> To distinguish in men between that sanctification which flows from the law, and that which is of the gospel, is a matter so narrow, that the angels in heaven have much ado to discern who differ: a work fitter for angels to cut the scantling in it, than for the ministers of the gospel, though indeed there be great difference of the one from the other.[12]

It was commonly held by Puritan divines that a man could judge of his sanctification by the "root" whence it springs, the rule by which it is guided, and the end at which it aims. Cotton accepted this three-fold standard, but his application of it was distinctly Cottonian. The root of sanctification, he declared, is faith, which (the soul already having fellowship with Christ) is wrought in the soul by the Spirit, "so that faith must concur unto the rootedness of our sanctification in Christ." But both believers who persevere and hypocrites who fall away have this root to some extent, as do those who, terrified by the law, are moved to works of refor-

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[10] V. below, ch. 8.

[11] Rejoynder, pp. 140, 146.

[12] New Cov., pp. 59f, cf. 78.

mation.[13] In respect of the rule of sanctification, both saints and hypocrites seek the word of God, and delight in its commands. Hypocrites look to the comfort they have already obtained from their obedience, while the faithful look ever to Christ to preserve and maintain their consolation; and gross hypocrites will soon go back to their favorite lusts. Yet others will so thoroughly appear to delight in the Lord's commands, and continue in universal obedience until their deaths, that it is impossible to distinguish them. In respect of the end of sanctification, a hypocrite aims at his own comfort, instead of the glory of God. Yet his own ends may long coincide with seeking God's glory, so that an honest Christian soul cannot, beside him, be any surer of his own devotion to God's glory. In root, rule, and bent of holiness a hypocrite, therefore, "will carry all things in so fair a way," that a Christian will hardly be able to discern the difference, unless he "hath his wits well exercised."[14]

But supposing his wits be properly exercised? Could not an enlightened conscience discern whether a man's sanctification was true? Cotton replied, characteristically, That depends. The ministers were propounding a "practical syllogism" of the form,

> He that is truly sanctified is justified,
> But I am such,
> Ergo I am justified.

Accuracy in the minor premise was critical, a mistake being

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[13] Ibid., pp. 60-66, cf. 80f.

[14] Ibid., pp. 67ff, 70ff, 82ff.

eternally fatal. The ministers, however, held that a regenerate conscience is enlightened so as truly to discern the soul's disposition in works of sanctification, and is competent to conclude accordingly. Cotton allowed that such conclusions by practical reasoning are valid, but only if the observation of conscience is based on the Spirit's testimony, and only if the conclusion follows from "spiritual sight" of one's interest in Christ,--which was, in effect, to deny the point.[15]

Consistent with his emphasis on the Spirit's work, Cotton distinguished between empirical knowledge of justification (or "historical faith of my justified estate") and faith of assurance of justification (based on immediate divine testimony). To this distinction corresponds another, concerning the power of conscience to know a man's estate, viz., between "a created spiritual light abiding in the regenerate conscience" and "an immediate light of the Spirit of God above the letter of the word, and above the created light of the conscience." Knowledge may be had from arguments founded on sanctification and on works, "as effects from adjuncts." Knowledge is a deduction from observable data, founded on a proposition derived from scripture (e.g., a conditional promise), and upon a judgment of conscience concerning a man's works, conscience being "enlightened with that created light which hath renewed it." A conclusion of knowledge, however, cannot yield assurance of justification, save as it follows from a prior conclusion of

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[15] Rejoynder, p. 146.

faith. In such a conclusion the proposition from scripture must be "an absolute promise or some word of grace freely offering Christ and his righteousness without the condition of any works of ours to go before it"; and instead of the experience of conscience there must be "an effectual application not so much of that proposition, as of Christ in it." This application is made only by the Spirit himself, without respect to the being or sight of any work in us. Empirical self-knowledge, informed by scriptural propositions, is here set against immediate testimony of the Spirit, as the sole sufficient evidence of union with Christ.[16]

Cotton argued that this depreciation of self-knowledge on the part of the regenerate follows necessarily from the office of the Spirit in the apprehension of things pertaining to a gracious estate. It is the Spirit's proper function to "clear up to [us] all things pertaining to spiritual sight," which means opening the eyes of the understanding, revealing the mysteries of God's kingdom, and opening the scriptures and God's work to us. There is no means under heaven for declaring these things "evidently unto the soul," save the Holy Ghost, acting immediately. Prior to the Spirit's witness a man's knowledge remains that of an enlightened conscience only, i.e., based on the testimony of created things, which is, by definition, incapable of ascending to things of God and of grace. Such things may be discerned only "spiritually," i.e., only by that light which comes directly from the Spirit.

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[16] Ibid., pp. 117, 119, 146ff.

Though every regenerate man has his mind and conscience in some measure enlightened with spiritual knowledge, yet more than this is necessary "to clear spiritual sight..., even the clearing of the object (our spiritual estate) and...of the scripture that concerns it, and of the works of God in us."[17]

The ministers also regarded these things as the Spirit's work, but they held that he accomplishes it through that "created spiritual light" by which a man is enabled to perceive the excellency of Christ the Savior, the truth of his own justification, and the soundness of his sanctification. Puritan theologians traditionally distinguished between "historical," merely intellectual knowledge of the things of God, and "lively," "cordial," "experimental" knowledge of them, as they are experienced in power and truth by the individual himself. They insisted, however, that the individual could know when he experienced God's works, and might by enlightened reflection draw appropriate conclusions from it. Cotton, in contrast, subordinated such knowledge to a still higher, increated knowledge, given by the Spirit directly, which he held to be alone determinate of true sainthood. From the orthodox viewpoint, this was a not altogether legitimate subordination of created grace to the increated power of the Trinity.

Asked whether a Christian must necessarily have his first assurance from an absolute, rather than from a conditional promise, Cotton responded, If from a conditional promise, how, before we are assured of union with Christ, are we to be as-

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[17] Ibid., pp. 139f.

sured that the condition is a saving grace peculiar to the elect?

> If it be said that any saving grace may be discerned to be peculiar to God's elect by some peculiar characteristics whereby it is discerned from the common graces of the forwardest hypocrites; I answer, True, such peculiar characters there be, whereof this is always one, without discerning whereof the rest can never be discerned, that, such graces spring from a lively faith, and do work from faith in Christ, without which it is impossible to please God.[18]

True sanctification is discernible only by the light of justifying faith previously discerned. Cotton would not deny that sanctification could be an evidence of justification, provided it was "evident sanctification." However, the difference between legal and evangelical sanctification is made "evident" only "by the revelation or manifestation of the Spirit of God, both of the state and the work of a good Christian; and that ordinarily also."[19] The whole enterprise,--in accordance with Cotton's understanding of the order of regeneration,--rests upon the direct witness of the Spirit, apprising a man of his interest in Christ "in an absolute promise of free grace."[20] A man is first "in Christ," then the Spirit tells him that he is justified, then the man has faith that he is justified in Christ, then the Spirit shows him that his sanctification is true.

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[18] Sixteen Questions, p. 47; Rejoynder, p. 92.

[19] New Cov., pp. 75ff, 98f (ital. added); Rejoynder, pp. 113f, cf. 87, 104; cf. Way Cleared, pp. 43f. "Ordinarily" means in course of the normal, ordained procedure by which God encompasses regeneration; as opposed to "extraordinarily," or "miraculously." E.g., Usher, Body of Divinity, pp. 137f.

[20] New Cov., pp. 28, 56; Rejoynder, pp. 94, 107.

(c) "Going on in a covenant of works"

The Hutchinsonians justified their separatistic behavior on the ground that the elders of the Bay were "legal" preachers and their hearers "legal" Christians, "preaching" and/or "being under a covenant of works," as against a covenant of grace. In the accepted meaning of the words, however, this charge made little sense. The elders were not preaching "do this and live" in the same way that it had been enjoined upon Adam. Wherein, they desired earnestly to know, did the Boston church find them to differ so greatly from Brother Cotton? Before the Court, Anne Hutchinson was pressed to state what she meant by the distinction, with regard to the elders, between a covenant of grace and a covenant of works. She meant, it appeared, that the ministers, not having the "seal" of the Spirit immediately in their hearts, and being, therefore, "as the Disciples before the ascension," were yet under the dispensation of the law, and not of the gospel. Wheelwright, when pressed, allowed that his fast-day sermon had been aimed at those who made works of sanctification an evidence of justification; and Cotton, in response to the 13th of the Sixteen Questions, spelled out the matter in terms of an illegitimate "grounding" of justification upon sanctification.[21] His handling of the question revealed the tendency already noted, viz., to subordinate the activity and instrumentality of created things, as created, to the im-mediate, increated opera-

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[21] Winthrop, Journal, I, 211; "Proceeding of the General Court...at Newtown,...Oct., 1637," Short Story, in Hall, p. 252.

tions of the Trinity.

Is it, the elders inquired, "a building of my justification on my sanctification: or a going on in a covenant of works," if I evidence my justification by my sanctification? Cotton allowed that "at first blush" the phrase seemed plain, but was in fact ambiguous and obscure. He reviewed the possible interpretations (and incidentally defined the issue for subsequent commentators).[22] To evidence justification by sanctification is, on the face of it, "no more than to give or hold forth my sanctification for an evident argument of my justification," which, however, means two different things. It can mean to offer sanctification (I) as a cause or ground of justification, or (II) as an evidence of it, in the sense of a sign or effect. In the second case, sanctification may be offered (a) as the only evidence of justification (having nothing else to show for it), or (b) as "a concurrent sign, together with other signs and witnesses, which may make both my justification and sanctification clear" (Cotton's own position). The first case, in which justification is founded on sanctification as its ground, cause, and matter, is indeed to go on in a covenant of works, and is the foundation of popery. This was agreed on all hands. In the second case (II), sanctification is not offered as the cause of justification, but as the cause of faith, and this in two possible senses: either (1) as the ground of the faith by which one is justified, or (2) as the ground of the faith whereby one believes

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[22] Sixteen Questions, pp. 52-55.

that one is justified. The first possibility is also to build justification on sanctification, and so to go on in a covenant of works. Sanctification is not the cause of justifying faith, but vice versa. This, too, was admitted by all. The second possibility may also be a building of justification on sanctification, in two ways: either (i) when a man has no evidence of dependence on Christ for righteousness, or of effectual calling unto Christ, and faith in Christ, except a visible change in his behavior from a prophane to a sanctified course; or (ii) "when we shall give a man no other ground or evidence of justification, but only from the evidence of sanctification." This was more to the point. The ministers agreed on the first count,--hypocrites are capable of such a visible change in behavior, but they dissented from the second. Unlike Cotton, the ministers regarded sanctification as a sufficient evidence of justification; and they did not consider the founding of "faith of assurance" on sanctification to be equivalent to founding justification on sanctification. They were concerned with the means by which a man could apprehend the prior fact of his justification, rather than with the cause or ground of justification.

> [T]o give no other evidence of my justification but sanctification [they observed], at the most is but to build the assurance of my justification on my sanctification. And the being of my justification is much different from the seeing of it. Arguments from consequents (as effects and adjuncts, etc.) may ground my knowledge of a thing; whereas only causes, which are precedent, do make up the being of it.[23]

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[23] "Elders Reply," in Hall, p. 71 (ital. added).

Cotton also listed a lesser aberration, viz. the occasional "going aside" to a covenant of works, though being under a covenant of grace. This occurs when a man, truly justified but unaware of it, "doth then betake himself to his works for the hastening of his assurance." These err, in that having Christ in their hearts as the foundation of their justification, but not seeing it, "upon this golden and precious foundation, they build hay and stubble, in seeking, and settling, and grounding their faith of assurance not upon Christ, nor upon the free promise of grace, nor upon the witness of the Spirit itself applying the same, but upon the holiness of their own work."[24] Their assurance, accordingly, lies open to many doubts, until the confidence they have built on their works is burnt up in the fire of temptation and the light of God's word and Spirit.

Cotton concluded his response with the proposition that he who has "a clear sight of his estate in a free promise of grace in Christ" by the light of the Spirit shed abroad in his soul does "evidently" discern both his justification and his sanctification, each bearing witness to the other, and the Spirit to both. Such a one, in so evidencing his justification by his sanctification neither builds the former on the latter, thereby going on in a covenant of works, nor does he go aside to it. The ministers replied that in this Cotton rendered vain the entire discussion about discerning sanctification and evidencing justification, and subsumed all under a

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[24] Sixteen Questions, pp. 55f.

single conclusion, viz., "That we can see neither sanctification nor faith no nor justification, before the witness of the Spirit; but all at once by it." Which was very nearly the case.[25]

Cotton was hit, and delivered himself at length (in the Rejoynder). If a man has only sanctification to give as ground of his justification, Cotton declared, then his faith is not founded on Christ's righteousness, or on the free promise of grace, but only upon the man's own works. Such a man, therefore, does not believe "on him that justifies the ungodly, ...but on him which justifies the godly," and this is not the faith of the covenant of grace. The ministers, he complained, changed his words and altered his meaning, "for I do not say, to give no other evidence, but to give no other ground of my justification." To this the ministers might legitimately have responded that Cotton had changed the question, for they were concerned with the apprehension of justification, not with its being. Cotton, however, would not admit the distinction.[26] He introduced his own distinction between assurance of justifying faith, and knowledge of justification derived from works of sanctification as adjuncts, and adduced Calvin to the effect that assurance of faith cannot be founded on works, which can only be added to faith as posterior probatio. The sight of sanctification alone contributes nothing to assurance of justification. To offer no argument for assurance of justify-

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[25] Ibid., p. 57; "Elders Reply," Hall, p. 75.

[26] Rejoynder, pp. 116f.

ing faith save one's sanctification, therefore, is to build justification (as well as assurance) "either upon no foundation at all, or only upon such an one as works, which can have no place but if anywhere in a covenant of works."[27]

Cotton's objections sprang from a strong antipathy toward introduction of works, as such, under the rubric of the covenant of grace. As the elders put it initially to Cotton, works were conceived as indeed posterior probatio, proceeding from, and revealing, a condition previously existing. They were not arguing that a man could claim a right ex debito to the covenant of grace on the basis of works in himself, but that if he found in himself gracious works, he might conclude an interest in the covenant,--which he already had in fact, in virtue of the arbitrary connection between justification and sanctification, as ordained by the divine will. To put the matter in these terms, however, was for Cotton to use language which is not proper to the covenant of grace, language, indeed, which is not Protestant. To take first assurance of comfort and blessedness from any work of sanctification, "though...we trust to the grace and faithfulness of the promises," before we see our union with Christ and our right in him to the promises, is to "receive them not of grace but of debt," which derogates necessarily from free grace. God justifies solely ex gratia, and he will not reveal that he has justified by means of works of sanctification, or promises made to them. "It is the glory of grace to dash all works out

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[27] Ibid., p. 117.

of countenance," when the Lord, sitting upon a throne of grace, pronounces a sinner to be righteous. "Nor will it stand with the glory of grace to bring us to rest or assurance of peace in Christ, in the mediation of our works."[28]

Regenerating grace, and the covenant of grace, exclude works, per se and entirely.[29] If the ministers object to what they regard as misuse of the term "works" in point of evidencing justification, let them be entreated to disrelish the thing itself, and abandon all mention of sanctification, works of sanctification, and promises to them, as means and ways to first assurance of justification. "If we will speak as Protestants, we must not speak of good works as causes or ways of our first assurance." Call good works what you please, gifts of grace, or whatever, they are still good works. "The point is rather worse than better, to clothe unwholesome and Popish doctrine with Protestant and wholesome words." To the suggestion that the whole dispute might be taken up in the conclusion "that in the covenant of grace no man seeth any thing to evidence his good estate, or seeth what he doth but by the immediate witness of the Spirit itself," Cotton wryly remarked that when he read this he checked over his manuscript to see what he had written to suggest "such a vast conclusion." He proceeded to qualify himself, but without relinquishing the point, and admitted parenthetically that the ministers had

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[28] Ibid., pp. 98f, 127, cf. 132.

[29] V. Ibid., pp. 122f.

judged rightly.[30]

At issue between Cotton and his colleagues was the nature of the evidence by which a man might be assured of his union with Christ. For Cotton, only the testimony of Christ himself was sufficient. Neither faith in Christ, as a human act, nor free and hearty obedience to divine commands, are able to provide the soul with settled comfort touching its estate, "until the Spirit of Christ doth witness to the soul God's thoughts of peace toward himself," and this "by immediate light from himself."[31] All six "witnesses" of 1 John 5.7, 8, which are given to beget and confirm faith, are in fact witnesses "nextly and immediately only by the testimony and efficacy of the Spirit," who, though himself a witness in his own capacity, nonetheless also "applies and conveys the testimony of all the rest immediately to the soul."

> Immediately I say though not without the word of God nor without (sometimes in some cases) the work of God, yet with his own immediate power above the power which either the word hath of itself, of the work of any creature.[32]

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[30] "Elders Reply," Hall, p. 74; Rejoynder, pp. 133f, 138, 139-142.

[31] Ibid., pp. 107, cf. 140, 142. Cf. Mrs. Hutchinson's alleged assertion that "the first thing we receive for our assurance is our election" (p. 87 , above). C. qualified himself: "I do not say in his election but in his effectual calling" (Rejoynder, p. 142). This distinction was technically significant, but the position was essentially the same: assurance begins only with the Spirit's immediate testimony that one's sins are forgiven.

[32] Rejoynder, p. 80, cf. 141. The six witnesses are the Father, Son, and Spirit, in heaven, and the water (of sanctification), the Spirit, and the blood (of Christ), in earth (K.J.V.).

This distinction between the power of the members of the Trinity and the work of creatures was crucial for Cotton. Only the former can bear witness to the bond which arises in the covenant of grace between sovereign divinity and impotent, perverted humanity. It is not within the capacity of any created thing, qua created thing, including the activity of gracious habits (though they are begotten in the soul by the Spirit), in itself to reveal anything conclusive about this bond, until the Spirit illumines it directly. A man cannot argue from acts of faith and sanctification to justification, as from effects to causes, because he cannot know, apart from the Spirit's revealing of it, that his faith and sanctification are true. There is nothing distinctive about the works of either by which one may recognize them. True faith of assurance rests solely upon its proper object,--God's mercy and free grace to men in Christ, and then only as "revealed to me by some divine testimony." The scripture is such a testimony in respect of its content and origins, yet the personal application of its truths "is not of divine force, as a divine testimony unless the Spirit breathe in them and apply them to me." Neither is an enlightened (i.e., regenerate) conscience any help in judging the soundness of gracious works. To hearken to "the witness of our own spirit" will not serve, "for our own spirit is of itself but a creature, though a good creature." Prior to the Spirit's witnessing, to see by an enlightened conscience a work in oneself, and a promise made to it in scripture, and to take confidence from thence that one

is justified,--such can only be to go on in the covenant of works; for "such a faith is not the work of God's almighty power begotten by the divine testimony and operation of the Spirit of God (for it is before it), but hammered it is and engendred out of the concourse of three creatures."[33] The operation of God's almighty power and the capacities of created things are incompatible, and the latter cannot be the bearer or vehicle of the former, even in a practical syllogism. Only divine operations can reveal divine things.

A saint's knowledge of his justification,--for all practical purposes his "justifying faith,"--begins with the Spirit's testimony thereto "in a word of free grace only without works," which the Spirit subsequently confirms by assisting the regenerate to perform gracious works, and then confirms such works (by further testimony) that they are indeed gracious. And all this he does when the saint-presumptive is utterly prostrate in the consciousness of his lostness before God.[34] Cotton was never willing to say that the Spirit's revealing is above or independent of, or contrary to, the biblical word, or other ordained means of grace. By just so much he remained orthodox. Other spirits were less inhibited, though agreeing with Cotton in the substance of the point. Thus Capt. John Underhill, returning from England in September, 1638, was charged in the Court with having said (perhaps

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[33] Ibid., pp. 141f, cf. 126; 149, cf. 85.

[34] Ibid., p. 151.

ironically) that

> he had lain under a spirit of bondage and legal way five years, and could get no assurance, till at length, as he was taking a pipe of tobacco, the Spirit set home an absolute promise of free grace with such assurance and joy, as he never since doubted his good estate, neither should he, though he should fall into sin.

Cotton, to whom it had by then been conclusively revealed where things in Boston stood, rebuked him, to the effect that "although God doth often lay a man under a spirit of bondage, when he is walking in sin, as Paul was, yet he never sends such a spirit of comfort but in an ordinance, as he did to the same Paul by Ananias; and ergo advised him well to examine the revelation and joy which he had."[35]

Behind Cotton's denial of the evidential significance of works of sanctification lay a tendency to subordinate the human creature, in regeneration, to the direct operation of the Trinity, at the expense of the creature's integrity. In effect, Cotton denied the objective reality of regenerating grace in the realm of created nature and second causes. Instead of flowing mediately through created things,--human faculties, biblical word, and gracious habits,--God's salvific activity impinges directly upon the elect individual. This being the case, the covenant of grace must exclude creaturely works, even works of sincere obedience if they are offered as

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[35] Winthrop, Journal, I, 275f. Underhill was a figure of consequence in the Colony, as captain of the Boston militia, until he was disenfranchised and relieved of his post for joining in the petition protesting Wheelwright's conviction for sedition (Short Story, Hall, p. 276). His remark, and subsequent defense of it, as given by Winthrop, is in the tradition of John Eaton, the English "Antinomian."

ground of assurance. Indeed, any reference to works implies recurrence to the covenant of works with the first Adam. By reducing justifying faith to the infused capacity passively to receive Christ, Cotton in effect excluded human activity from its legitimate place in the salvific transaction. Men were thus denied a genuine, active consent to the terms of justification. Therein was man's nature as a rational agent disregarded, and the covenantal character of the covenant of grace surrendered. The orthodox dialectic of nature and grace was upset, its entire weight being shifted to the gracious pole, and a fundamental contrast was drawn between covenant of works and covenant of grace.

Chapter 7: The Elders of the Bay and the Objectivity of Regenerating Grace

In his chronicle of the providential history of New England, Edward Johnson published the lament of a godly (and orthodox) English emigre who chanced to arrive in Boston during the Antinomian affair. Led by the Spirit of Christ in the wake of the ministers, he had come "hoping to find [Christ's] powerful presence in the preaching of the word," though administered by frail men, "and also by the glass of the law," in which corrupt nature and human inability to good are revealed. On landing, however, he was informed that these preachers and their disciples were but a company of legalists, "who lie pouring over the law which Christ hath abolished," and who, ignorantly, are sorrowful when they break it; and that their learned sermons, though full of scripture and aided by the Spirit, were inferior to the ravishing personal revelations to which he might attain under the tutelege of a certain female. He was told that they were scarcely ministers of Christ who preached the requirements of the law, and who regarded performance of legal duties as fruit of the in-dwelling of Christ's Spirit; and that, being justified already, he ought to "cast off all godly sorrow for sin as unbecoming a soul that is united to Christ by faith."

This man had come out of England intending to profit by Christ's presence and power in the proper administration of all His ordinances. But from what he heard in Boston, it seemed that "little increase in the graces of Christ" was to be found in ordinances at all, and that he might "take a naked

Christ." But "woe is me if Christ be naked to me, wherewith shall I be clothed[?]" Here were people who, under the pretense of a free and ample gospel, shut out the soul "from partaking with the divine nature of Christ, in that mystical union of his blessed Spirit creating, and continuing his graces in the soul." The sinner must encounter Christ's saving power directly, unchanneled through "means," and he must look to nothing in himself as indicative that he has in fact experienced that power. Having heard enough, the godly man fled into the woods, and poured out his distress to the "senseless trees and echoing rocks." By accident he wandered into Thomas Shepard's meeting-house at lecture-time, where (to his great relief) he heard these very opinions magnificently refuted.[1]

To Johnson's emigre the speech of "this poor, weak, pale complectioned man" (Shepard's appearance was not prepossessing) was like that of a veritable "privy counsellor" of Christ, clearing His work in the soul from all the false doctrines of the Boston errorists, and the man resolved to cast his lot in New England. Shepard was the leading spokesman for New-England orthodoxy in debate with Antinomians on both sides of the Atlantic. His sermons on Matt. 25.1-13, begun in June, 1636, and Bulkeley's from about the same period, present the elder's side of the Massachusetts controversy. Basic to their position was the conviction that regenerating grace retains objective form in the created realm. Equally important for

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[1] Johnson, Wonder-working Providence, pp. 94f, 101ff.

their position was the conviction that God, in regenerating men, normally employs created things as means and instruments, and works in a manner appropriate to man's created nature. We turn first to the orthodox Puritan understanding of the divinely ordained "means of grace."

(a) Status of created "means"

In their conception of God's activity ad extra, Puritans were thoroughgoing voluntarists. What is, is, and is the way it is, because God wills it. Puritan theology was an ellipse, with God's sovereign will and the religious life of the believer as the foci, and each head of the theological system is referable to both. Puritans were intensely concerned with personal attainment of a state of grace. They were equally concerned to uphold the divine sovereignty in all things. Their professional activity, in pulpit and study, was directed overwhelmingly to the fostering and nurturing of an experience of regeneration. At the same time, they were convinced that the possibility of regeneration, together with the means for accomplishing it, rested ultimately upon God's sovereign will and good pleasure, and on nothing else.

Before time was, God in his secret counsel and for his own glory, chose certain men to everlasting bliss, irrespective of anything in them which might move him to such a choice. The same decree includes not only the end, but also the means thereto, viz., the redemption wrought by Christ, the application to the elect of the benefits thereof, and the

preservation of the saints through faith unto salvation.[2] Included in this ordo salutis are the concrete instrumentalities of word and sacrament (the "means of grace" in the narrow sense) through which the Spirit works in regenerating individuals. The painful and powerful preaching of law and gospel, to the actual and potential saints gathered at Newtown in Massachusetts Bay, is grounded in the divine decree as much as the substance of the grace conveyed, the work of Christ who obtained it, and the activity of the Spirit who effects the conveyance. Considered largely, the substance of saving grace is Christ himself and his benefits. But the sinner encounters Christ mediately, in the objective, created words of "poor, weak, pale" Mr. Shepard. This was the major premise of the orthodox understanding of the mechanism of regeneration: it is accomplished through created means which are ordained by God to that function.

The means used, moreover, are suited to the nature and capacities of men as reasonable creatures.[3] This was the minor premise of the orthodox understanding of the mechanism of regeneration. God proceeds in a manner which does not overrule, but is in harmony with man's nature as he was created.

> We consist of body and soul in this world, and our souls are much confined and tied to our senses. Imagination

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[2] V. Westminster Confession, III; Ames, Marrow (1642), I.xviii.4, xxv.4, 16, 23; Perkins, Golden Chain, Works (1626), I, 24.

[3] Cf. Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 89, 137ff; Shepard, Thes. Sabb., Pt. I, th. 24f, 99.

> propounds to the soul greater things than the senses. So God helps the soul by outward things that work upon the senses; sense upon the imagination, and so things pass into the soul.
> God frames his manner of dealing suitable to the nature he hath created us in. Therefore he used the word and the sacrament, and such things, whereby he makes impressions upon the very soul itself.[4]

In regeneration the sinner becomes in truth a "new creature," yet his translation from death to life does not violate the ontological orders of the first creation. He becomes a new man, but through it all he remains fully a man, and his spiritual "rebirth" is accomplished via the faculties of his distinctively human nature.

Viewed with regard to man's natural faculties, the problem of salvation is a problem of enabling an individual to apprehend communion with God as his greatest good, and of persuading him to "close" with this good. It is axiomatic that man is inherently capable of such apprehension, and is susceptible of such persuasion. In regeneration, the Spirit accomplishes both, via the ordained means.[5]

In the plain, vigorous preaching of godly ministers, the Spirit presents reasons and propounds arguments to the understanding, and thereby presents motives to the will. In the preaching of the law, He convinces a man of his sinful estate, of the heat of God's just wrath against him, and of the utter powerlessness of his own righteousness to save him. In the

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[4] Sibbes, The Excellency of the Gospel Above the Law, in Works (1863), IV, 248.

[5] Cf. Hooker, Unbeliever's Preparing, pp. 94f, 127f, 137ff (2nd. ser.), 4f, 65; cf. Sibbes, Excellency of the Law, pp. 246ff; Shepard, Parable, pp. 51f.

preaching of the gospel, the Spirit presents God's offer of redemption to all who will receive Christ by faith, He shows Christ to be a savior sufficient to cover a man's sin, however great, and He shows Christ yearning for and entreating the poor sinner to come and embrace Him. The sinner need only be willing to come, to surrender his lusts and his own paltry righteousness, and cast himself on Christ. Of his own power, however, the sinner cannot come. He sees all this and knows intellectually that it is true, but he is so wedded to his favorite lusts and so conceited in his legal righteousness that, if he cannot have Christ and these, too, he will not have Christ. In this sad and helpless estate he remains, unless God should pity him and aid him.

At this point, in due season and according to his good pleasure, God enters, and by the power of his spirit, in and through the means, works in the elect the faith necessary to receive Christ and actively to embrace him.

The operation of the "means of grace," as Puritans represented it, is in effect sacramental: the audible, natural word is the vehicle of a hidden, supernatural grace.[6] There goes forth with the words of the minister a power of the Spirit which dissolves the hindrances in the mind of the hearer. In and through the hearing of the word, the Spirit conveys into the understanding a new, spiritual light, by which it is enabled for the first time to see God and Christ in

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[6] Cf. Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., p. 119; Shepard, Thes. Sabb., pp. 109f, 127f; Believer, pp. 226f; Hooker, Application of Redemption, p. 309; Perkins, Golden Chain, I, pp. 70f.

their true glory, excellency, and comeliness, and to value them accordingly. At the same time, and by the same means, the Spirit infuses into the will a new, spiritual principle of life, enabling it to follow the dictate of the enlightened understanding and to choose Christ and his benefits as the greatest of all goods. The result is that act of faith by which the soul goes forth to receive Christ, thereby entering into the covenant of grace, and partaking of the benefits of it.

Faith in the heart, which is the crucial nexus of the heavenly and creaturely realms in the life of the Christian, is in fact a persuasion. Its nature is spiritual, and its efficient cause is the Holy Spirit. But its instrumental cause is the word of the minister, and its form is that of a persuasion, which begins with cognition and issues in action, like every other human persuasion.[7]

> We on the one hand [wrote John Norton] against the Enthusiasts affirm not only the power to use, but the duty of using the means; and on the other hand, against the Arminians deny that man before grace can do anything, having the power of a cause (so far forth as comes from them) in order to life; because we are reasonable creatures God proceeds with us in the use of means; because we are dead creatures, in respect of the efficacy of the means, we depend wholly and absolutely upon God.[8]

Attendance upon the ordained means is essential to regeneration, though the efficacy of the means stems ultimately from

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[7] Cf. Shepard, Parable, I.x.5, xxi.2, and pp. 229ff, 505ff; Believer, pp. 127, 204ff; Thes. Sabb., I, th. 83; Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 302-310; Hooker, Unbeliever's Preparing, pp. 32ff, 56ff, 157.

[8] Orth. Ev., p. 271; cf. 211.

the power of God's free grace. The freedom of God and the liberty of man are both upheld, the respective operations of creator and creatures are seen to concur, and each pole of the dialectic of nature and grace receives its proper due.

For orthodox Puritans, regeneration is accomplished in a constant, regular way, and by means of agencies which belong to the created order. God works according to a stated procedure, the shape of which is given in scripture, from which he does not, for all practical purposes, deviate. God, moreover, does not deal directly with human souls, but employs the agency of second causes which operate according to their own proper natures.[9] God can, of course, save without means (he does so in the case of elect infants who die before they could ever hear preaching). In the case of persons of discretion, however, he chooses not to. The New-England Antinomians, in saying that men are to "do nothing" (in the way of attendance on means) before conversion, were seen to be saying that a man can and ought to have Christ without the ordained means of receiving him.[10] From the elders' viewpoint, this was, in effect, to disregard God's will, revealed in scripture, touching the ordinary means of grace.[11]

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[9] Cf. Shepard, Parable, II.xv.6, and pp. 109ff; Believer, p. 226; Thes. Sabb., pp. 127.

[10] Shepard, Believer, pp. 211f, 228f, 251f; Parable, p. 503, cf. 59, 163, 170.

[11] On the basis of the foregoing regarding the place of "created means" in the order of regeneration, and of the observations regarding "preparation," pp. 96-104, above, one may dissent from certain presuppositions of Norman Pettit's treatment of conversion in The Heart Prepared (New Haven & London,

(b) Significance of justifying faith

God ordinarily deals with men as intelligent and volitional beings. The covenant of grace, accordingly, must reflect this fact. In particular, entry into it must involve a genuine act of consent on man's part. Were this not the case, it would cease, strictly speaking, to be a covenant, for a covenant by definition is a mutual agreement involving stated conditions on both sides. Man may not propose terms to God, but he must consent to the terms imposed by God. It was noted above that the elders, in contrast to Cotton, regarded faith as the condition of the covenant of grace on man's part. The

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1966): viz., 1) that "in theory" a major segment of the Reformed tradition understood conversion to be an instantaneous "wrenching" from sin to grace, a "sudden if not violent transformation," "a blinding flash,"--withall a lightening-bolt-on-the-Damascus-Road sort of personal experience; and 2) that the commitment of certain Reformed theologians, including New-England Puritans, to a significant place in conversion for human activity, represented a doctrinally reprehensible "wedge into grace," "an inroad into predestinarian assumptions." P.'s effort to father (1) on Zwingli is quite problematic. The "blinding flash" paradigm of conversion is reminiscent of a Cane Ridge meeting, rather than a 16th-century Swiss Reformed congregation. In any case, the full text to which P. refers (p. 16, nt. 25) indicates that for Zwingli conversion was anything but an "instantaneous illumination" or a thorough, unmistakable experience. Presupposition (2) involves a false opposition, transmitted (if not invented) by Perry Miller, viz. that divine sovereignty is equivalent to "divine coercion," as something "arbitrary" and synonymous with "tyranny," and that the Reformed tradition is properly committed to the "dogmatic stand that anything done on man's part diminishes God's sovereignty." Pettit's volume suffers from imprecise usage of the terms "election," "sovereignty," and "omnipotence," from neglect of the traditional distinction between the divine decree considered in itself and the execution of the decree, and from failure carefully to define, at the outset, the doctrinal limitations placed on human activity in relationship to saving grace. (V. esp. pp. 2f, 6ff, 12ff, 15f, 20, 28f, 41, 217ff, 221.) On the divine decree, the divine "efficiency," and the natural liberty of the human creature, v. chs. 9 and 10, below.

necessary conditionality of the covenant of grace will be considered in a later chapter. Here, we are concerned to note the elders' conception of justifying faith, understood as the condition of entry into the covenant.

As Protestants, the Massachusetts elders insisted that justification is "by faith alone," but they were equally insistent that a man is active in believing. Sinful man has nothing in himself by which to raise a claim against God, that God should come to him. He can only go himself to God in faith, leaving all his works behind. Justification is said to "be by faith in order that it might be of grace." Yet a man must, in some sense, truly "go." In the gospel, the sinner is informed that the life which Adam lost is now laid up in Christ, "to those who believe," and that they who would have life "must [accordingly] go out of themselves to the Lord for it." A man must "flee to Christ," must "go to Christ," must "put forth his hand" and "take" Christ's righteousness. The figures are consistently active. A man must be able to "take grace and carry it away." He must will to receive it and behave accordingly. That corrupt nature can either so will or do was not at all in question. The act of coming to Christ is a gracious act, but it is nonetheless an act on man's part. It is "the motion of the soul between those two extremes of emptiness and death here, to life and fulness there."[12]

Faith is necessarily active. Therefore, "to sit still

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[12] Ibid., pp. 317f; Thes. Sabb., p. 128; Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 289f, 295f; Hooker, Unbeliever's Preparing, pp. 20, 168f.

and see nothing, and do nothing, is not faith, but sloth." This was the error of Antinomians, who held categorically that men are entirely passive in regeneration. Neither, the elders declared, is faith "a passive possibility of the soul to receive Christ, though that may prepare for him." This was one of Cotton's errors. Faith rather,

> is that work of the Spirit whereby a sinner, sensible of his extreme nakedness, emptiness, and wants, being called of God, his whole soul comes out of himself to Christ, for himself.

Or, varying the figure,

> Faith is the hand of the soul, and the putting of it forth is the act by which we receive Christ offered.

As such, faith is, properly speaking, the sine qua non of entry into the covenant of grace.[13]

John Cotton was willing to allow that the habit of faith, as a spiritual principle infused into the soul, in receipt of which the soul is passive, is the necessary condition for union with Christ, inasmuch as it makes the soul fit to receive Christ. Objecting to the language of causality in respect to the covenant of grace, however, he preferred not to speak of faith as a condition, at least not in the sense of "antecedent" condition. The ministers agreed that the habit of faith is freely given and wrought in the passive soul by God, but they insisted that the act of faith is what God required as the condition of the covenant. Cotton conceived of union with Christ in more-or-less classic Aristotelian fashion

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[13] Shepard, Parable, p. 318, cf. pp. 424f, 503; Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., p. 298.

as a form inhabiting matter, which must first be properly "disposed" before it can entertain the form. The habit of faith is a power disposing the soul to receive Christ, the act of faith (of adherence and dependence) being a fruit of union and an expression of the power of Christ dwelling in the soul. The elders regarded the habit of faith, in scholastic fashion, as in itself a potency which is perfected in act.[14] They understood Christ to be the terminus of the act put forth from the habit of faith, by which the soul goes to Christ in the promise of the gospel, and receives Christ back again in and through the promise. The preparing of the soul to receive Christ is accomplished in those works of conviction, etc., which God effects through the preaching of law and gospel before there is any saving faith in the heart. The habit of faith enables a man to perform the required condition of the covenant of grace, and God, as part of his obligation under the covenant, promises to supply it. The condition itself is "the acting of that faith received,...which is required on our part."[15]

Entry into the covenant, however, is entirely gratuitous, in respect both of preparation for it, and of ultimate inclusion into it. At this point Bulkeley entered a crucial qualification.

> [I]n the making up of the covenant betwixt God and us, God is first with us, he is the first mover, he begins with us

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[14] E.g., ibid., p. 298; cf. Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 105-111; cf. Preston, Breast-Plate, I, 140; New Covenant, pp. 389f.

[15] Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 298ff.

> before we begin with him; we should never seek to be in covenant with him, if he did not allure us and draw us unto him.[16]

Men do not first offer themselves to God, but God, at his own pleasure and by his sovereign efficacy, begins to prepare his own while they are yet dead in sin. In actually entering the covenant, faith always proceeds according to the stated order of God's offer in the word, and proposes no deviations. (This was a standard rejoinder to Antinomians.) God first offers himself as a God of mercy and pardon, promising to accept us in Christ. Accordingly, it is faith's first work "to carry the soul towards the covenant," first accepting the offer of mercy and pardon. In this, however, the work of faith is only to accept and to lay hold of grace.

> Faith brings nothing to God of our own, it offers nothing to stand in exchange for the mercy offered; it receives a gift, but it gives no price. The Lord holds out and offers the free grace of the covenant; faith receives it and makes it our own.

Herein lies the meaning of Isaiah 56.4 (the text for many a sermonic exhortation), "where we are said to lay hold of the covenant."[17] Puritan exhortations to seize, lay hold of, and take grace are properly to be read in light of this qualification, which for Bulkeley was not so much a qualification as it was an affirmation, or assertion, of the gracious side of the nature-grace dialectic.

Reflecting on the phenomenon of spiritual rebirth, Puritan theologians analyzed it into a logical order, and assigned

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[16] Gosp. Cov., p. 299.

[17] Ibid., pp. 301f; cf. Norton, Orth. Ev., p. 320.

to faith, on the basis of Romans 5.1, the place of instrumental cause. In identifying the act of faith as the condition of the covenant of grace, Bulkeley was speaking of faith exclusively in respect of its instrumentality. The act is man's, but the power is from God. The act neither creates man's justification as an efficient cause, nor merits a reward as a "good work." It is simply the means, ordained by God, by which men enter the covenant and receive the benefits thereof.[18] The phrase "we are justified by faith," Norton observed, is a metonymy, "whereby that which belongs to the principal cause, is attributed to the instrumental cause." Faith justifies neither for its own worth, or as an act of ours, but for the worth of, and in virtue of, the object that it apprehends. "Faith in the matter of our justification [Christ's obedience], is the instrument apprehending, and applying that which doth justify." It is not faith apprehending, but the obedience of Christ apprehended, which justifies.[19]

Justifying faith is properly "the direct act" of faith receiving Christ's righteousness, "or relying on him for pardon, according to the promise." It is to be distinguished, therefore, from assurance, i.e., from "a reflex act of faith, whereby we are fully persuaded, and do believe that we believe." The former justifies, the latter gives the believer a

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[18] Shepard, Believer, pp. 169f, 238ff; Thes. Sab., pp. 110, 123; Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 280-295.

[19] Orth. Ev., pp. 301-308; cf. 319-322.

sense of peace. On this point, also, the elders found Cotton to be in error, for he identified justifying faith and assurance.[20] For Cotton, faith was "justifying" in a declarative sense, in that by it a person apprehends the prior fact of his justification. Faith is thus a "condition consequent" on justification, rather than antecedent to it. Yet if this be true, the elders responded, then "a Christian is not justified by faith (which was Paul's phrase), but rather...faithed by his justification."[21] It is possible to speak of justification as existing before belief, inasmuch as it is purposed and determined in the divine mind and will, and inasmuch as it is already obtained by Christ's obedience. The point at issue, however, was whether "we may be truly said to be actually just in the sight of God," before we actually believe. The ministers held the negative. To make faith follow justification is fundamentally to alter the order of regeneration as given in scripture (Rom. 8.30).[22]

Faith, the elders maintained, is also to be distinguished from graces of sanctification, in virtue of its critical place as the condition of justification. Cotton, in making faith a "condition consequent," made it to be the first, and chief, of the sanctifying graces flowing from union with Christ. Faith

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[20] Ibid., p. 326; Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., p. 321; Shepard, Believer, pp. 166, 225.

[21] Ibid., pp. 166f. Cf. Short Story, "Unsavory Speech" No. 1: "To say that we are justified by faith is an unsafe speech, we may say we are justified by Christ."

[22] Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 322-325; cf. Shepard, Believer, pp. 225f; Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 321ff.

was "justifying" because it was wrought in a justified person. Yet, Bulkeley responded,

> if that be the reason of the phrase, we may affirm our justification to be as well by love, and sanctification, and holy obedience as by faith, because these are wrought in a justified person.[23]

The act of faith indeed springs from a gracious habit infused. According to the terms of the covenant of grace, however, faith precedes justification, and so precedes sanctification (strictly taken), also.

In substance, according to orthodox Puritans, faith is a gracious act, even as works of sanctification are gracious. Its significance, however, derives from its form as an act of adherence and dependence on Christ's righteousness for justification, and from its place in the order of regeneration as the ordained "way" by which the humbled sinner enters the covenant of grace. Justification follows the act of faith as the first benefit promised in the covenant. In speaking of faith as the antecedent condition of justification, "antecedent" is to be taken in the sense of an instrument apprehending, receiving, and applying Christ's righteousness, which righteousness is "the matter and moving cause" why God justifies. "It is true God justifies the ungodly; but how? not immediately without faith, but mediately by faith."[24] Christ's righteousness is effective for justification only as it is received. A man is not first taken into union with

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[23] Gosp. Cov., p. 324; Shepard, Believer, p. 226.

[24] Shepard, Thes. Sabb., pp. 110, cf. 123, 127f; cf. Norton, Orth. Ev., p. 186.

Christ secretly, and then informed of the fact, and that he is justified in consequence of it. Rather, a man is first informed that justification is to be had only in virtue of Christ's righteousness, according to the offer of the gospel; and seeing this, he willingly goes forth in faith to accept it.

(c) Nature of sanctification

Justification is a purely legal transaction in which God, "in the court of heaven," pronounces a sinner to be free from all debt of punishment, and declares him to have satisfied all obligations, due under the moral law. The sinner himself (inherently in his nature) is unchanged, but his condition in respect of God's curse and promise is altered. Sanctification, in contrast, is a positive change in the believer's person, and it follows justification, in order of nature, as one of the benefits conferred in the covenant of grace. For this reason sanctification is here treated separately from justifying faith. The elders' understanding of the inherence of sanctification in believers, and of the place of sanctification in the order of regeneration, was fundamental to their position respecting the evidencing of justification.

The locus "of sanctification" in the handbooks of divinity is the technical theological counterpart of the characteristic Puritan concern for the phenomenon of spiritual rebirth and its consequences for Christian life. Puritans took quite seriously the affirmation that a man, in being translated to a state of grace, is made a "new creature." A man under sin,

wrote Hooker, is so intimately wed to sin,--it is so much a part of him,--that to separate him from it is to rend, as it were, his very being as a person.[25] That a man should willingly obey God as his governor, and delight in God's commands, requires thorough renovation, if not re-creation, of the man. This is what transpires in sanctification.

> [B]y it a man is morally made a new man--another man. "All things are made new": he hath new thoughts, new opinions of all things, new desires, new prayers and praises, new dispositions.[26]

Sanctifying grace renews the whole man, first inwardly in all his faculties, and thence outwardly in his conversation, even as Adam's sin corrupts all the faculties and diffuses itself thence "like a leaven into the whole lump of our lives." The pattern of this renewal is the image of God as it is in Christ (and once was in Adam), comprising those graces of wisdom and holiness which enable a man to know and judge of things as God does, and "to love and will holiness and the means thereto as God doth." A Christian "at least hath a holy disposition and inclination (the habits of holiness) so to do."[27]

Sanctification, for Shepard and his colleagues, was seen to consist primarily in habits infused,--in powers enabling, and a gracious disposition inclining, to holy acts,--rather than in acts qua acts. It bears minute correspondence to its archetype in Christ, from whom it is derived; yet it belongs

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[25] Unbeliever's Preparing, pt. II, pp. 4f.

[26] Shepard, Believer, p. 256.

[27] Ibid., p. 257.

to the order of created being. It is wrought by the Spirit through hearing of the word, by faith. It subsists in the person of the believer. Sanctification has a certain objectivity. It is a presence and a power which can, in principle, be discerned, and there are standards by which it may be judged. On all these points the elders of the Bay found themselves in controversy with the Hutchinsonians.

The synod at Cambridge condemned as erroneous the notion that under the covenant of works "a legalist may attain the same righteousness for truth, which Adam had in innocency before the fall," a view which Cotton shared; and Anne Hutchinson was charged with the remarkable assertion that a hypocrite "may have all the righteousness of Adam and perish."[28] If these propositions are true, then, granting orthodox assertions about the image of God in Adam (as including power to fulfill the law unto eternal life), there is no essential difference between the graces of hypocrites and those of believers. There is, indeed, no personal regeneration of the believer at all. Some in Massachusetts maintained that all graces, even in the truly regenerate, are "mortal and fading," that a man may have all graces of sanctification and yet want Christ, and that a man may have true faith of dependence and still not be justified. These notions are variously related to the assertions, also condemned by the synod, that "the new creature, or the new man mentioned in the gospel, is not meant

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[28] Short Story, Error No. 12, cf. 16, 77; Shepard-Cotton Letters, in Hall, pp. 27ff, 32; Church Trial, Hall, p. 352.

of grace, but of Christ," and that "there is no inherent righteousness in the saints, or grace, and graces are not in the souls of believers, but in Christ only."[29] All of these "errors" are variations on the same theme, viz. that created grace, as created, remains on the "near" side of the infinite qualitative difference (to borrow a figure from a later era) which separates the realm of creatures from the increated power of the Trinity.

The question between the elders and their opponents concerned the location of the substance of sanctification,--whether in the soul of the believer or in the exalted Christ, and the manner of its presence in the believer,--whether inherently (though derivatively from Christ) or accidentally and immediately from Christ. The elders held the former. Christ is in believers, Shepard insisted, by the Spirit and in created graces. Unless Christ is personally present in the believer, or acts the believer by His direct influence from on high, there is no other possible interpretation of biblical expressions of Christ's presence in his own.

The elders affirmed, on one hand, that Christ the exalted Lord dwells in the believer by his Spirit, even the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead. Believers are annointed with an "eternal annointing," and their holiness is the same as that of the saints already glorified in heaven. On the other hand, the elders insisted that Christ's spirit is not in believers by immediate operations causing them to act, but

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[29] Short Story, Errors No. 18, 25, 55; 7, 15.

mediately, by created graces infused into the soul, which empower the man himself to act. "The Spirit is in the believer energetically, or operatively, by its saving effects." We are commanded, Shepard observed, to pray for grace, as David did (Ps. 51.10), "'Create in me a clean heart.' Now if it be a thing created in me, it is not the Spirit only in me, for that can not be created."[30] If Christ acts upon the believer only by the immediate operation of the Spirit, Shepard declared,

> then there is seeing in a Christian without an eye, and hearing without an ear, and knowing Christ without an understanding, and loving without love, and living without life, and feeding and eating without a mouth; and then, when these actings are over, a Christian is like another man; there is no law remains written on his heart, and so Christ should enter into his saints, like Satan into the serpent, who only acts the serpent, and when that is done, he remains a serpent again. Know it, the Lord Jesus his greatest work is not only to change the acts, but to change the heart; not only to put new actions, but a new nature into men.[31]

Gracious activity in believers springs from an inner abiding principle of life "received in us," and not from external influences which affect us only temporarily. Christ works through means, and the means are proportionate to, and perfect, the capacities of the object of his work. "All strength is from Christ," but mediately, in and through created habits of grace, imparting power to human faculties.[32]

The New-England opposition agreed that all strength is from Christ, and drew the corollary that the believer can do

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[30] Norton, Orth. Ev., p. 250; Shepard, Believer, p. 252; Parable, pp. 268f, 270f, 273f.

[31] Parable, p. 277.

[32] Ibid., pp. 268f, cf. I.xix.1-3; Thes. Sabb., th. 94f.

nothing until Christ moves him. The elders replied that Christ is indeed the source of a Christian's power, but that the Christian acts nonetheless from a power within himself. Graces of sanctification depend for their being and activity upon continued communion with Christ, and upon continued exercise of his Spirit's quickening powers. A Christian must continually "go to Christ" for renewed strength, in humility on account of the imperfection of his performance of duties, and in thankfulness that he has been able to perform them at all. The Christian's dependence for his strength, however, does not mean that he is powerless in himself, or must refrain from exercising such power as he has. "Adam had a law of divinity, whereby he, being a cause of counsel, was enabled by God to carry himself towards his end"; and in that measure in which Adam's image is renewed in them, believers are enabled to carry themselves toward their own proper end.[33]

If in fact there are no distinctive graces in saints, then, Shepard agreed, a man may well say, I must do nothing and see nothing, but look to Christ for all, whether to believe or to love. "If there be no grace in a Christian, nor Spirit, but all in Christ, then say it upon the housetops, and be not ashamed of it; men must see nothing, because they have nothing."[34] This, however, the elders would by no means concede. The ways of God in regeneration are not mysterious, but plain and perceptible. The sinner does not encounter Christ

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[33] Shepard, Parable, pp. 271, 273, 282.

[34] Ibid., pp. 272, 278, 462f.

in his heart directly, in a pure intuition or a "spiritual rapture," but in the objective, audible, visible "means." Neither does Christ, in his free and gracious omnipotence, disregard or overpower man's created nature. A man enters the covenant of grace by an act of consent; and he receives from Christ power to act obediently according to the moral law. There is an orderliness and an objectivity about the dispensing of saving grace, and a harmony between saving grace and human faculties, such that the regenerate are able to discern its presence in themselves, without waiting for direct testimony from the Spirit.

In the New-England controversy, all of the concerns which have been treated to this point were gathered up in the question about evidencing justification by sanctification. The elders' understanding of this matter is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 8: The Elders on the Power of Godliness and the Evidencing of Justification

Commenting on people who regard faith as a "condition consequent" to justification, Peter Bulkeley identified the fundamental issue in the New-England controversy.

> This is some of that new light which the old age of the Church hath brought forth; which what it tends unto, I know not, unless it be to this, that a man should not look at any habitual grace in himself, whether sanctification or faith, or any other, in as much as these avail nothing (according to them) to a man's justification, seeing we are justified before faith: They would have a man to see nothing in himself, because (as they think) the grace which is seen is temporal, that grace which is not seen is eternal.[1]

For the "errorists," in other words, grace which is subject to empirical observation, as something belonging to the created order, is qualitatively different from grace which is dispensed immediately by the Holy Spirit. Orthodox Puritans, however, would not admit this distinction. There is, they maintained, a power of godliness in the regenerate which may be discerned and identified apart from direct revelation by the Third Person of the Trinity. A man's estate can be known to himself without transcending the orders of creation, or the ordained "means" prescribed in the biblical word. This conviction underlay the Massachusetts elders' affirmation that works of sanctification could be a legitimate evidence of a

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[1] Gosp. Cov., p. 321 (ital. added). Cf. Short Story, Error No. 44, "No created work can be a manifest sign of God's love," taken as referring to such created graces as love to the brethren; and Error No. 45, "Nothing but Christ is an evidence of my good estate," understood in reference to the opposition between Christ "manifesting himself in works of holiness" and "Christ nakedly revealing himself to faith."

man's estate in grace.

The second section of this chapter concerns the elders' understanding of the evidential significance of sanctification. The biblical basis for their position they located in the "conditional promises" of the New Testament.

(a) Place of "conditional promises"

In order of nature, faith of adherence and dependence precedes faith of assurance, but practically this is not always the case. The situation regularly occurs where a man is in fact in covenant with God but does not know it, or, being sorely tried by temptations, comes to doubt it. At this point the distinction between absolute and conditional promises becomes important. It was agreed on all hands that the covenant of grace is dispensed in absolute promises founded exclusively in the divine good pleasure (having the form, "For mine own sake will I do thus and thus unto you"). It is the place of absolute promises to draw the soul to Christ, and to beget faith of adherence and dependence. In themselves, however, absolute promises are general. They show the cause of salvation but do not describe the particular persons to whom salvation is promised. The latter office belongs, rather, to conditional promises (of the form, "I will do it to them that do believe"), which are given in scripture as the most "direct, evident, and certain" way to try one's interest in the covenant of grace.[2]

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[2] Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 288-291; Shepard, Certain Select Cases Resolved, in Works (1967), I, 317ff.

Cotton and the elders agreed that God gives encouragement, when the soul is cast down by the sense of its wretchedness and weakness, by absolute promises. The point at issue, however, was how a man is to apply to himself the blessings of the promise, and how he is to be assured that his faith of adherence and dependence is sound. Shepard answered, By means of a conditional promise. When a man is uncertain whether he is included in the covenant, and questions whether the promises of it belong to him, this rule is to be followed:

> [L]et him so sue and seek for the good of the absolute promise, until, by reflecting upon his own acts, herein he perceive himself adorned and dignified with the qualification of some conditional promise; and then if he can find the condition or qualification within himself, then ...he may conclude that the conditional promise belongs to him; and if one promise, then all God's promises; and therefore that absolute promises are his own, because at least one conditional promise is.[3]

If a man finds himself truly humble before God, or earnestly longs to come to Christ, or diligently employs all known means, waiting for God to make good his promise,--to each of these "conditions" a promise is annexed. If the conditional promise truly belongs to a man, he may conclude that the absolute promises do also, and then he is "to press God to make them good" to him, and to believe that God shall do so "as verily and really as if [he already] had the performance of them."[4]

Whether the acts to which conditional promises are made merit the promised blessedness, or are efficient causes of it,

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[3] Ibid., p. 320.

[4] Ibid., pp. 320-323.

was not in question. Neither was it implied that a man acquires a right to a gracious reward by such acts. Life is in fact promised to works, Bulkeley noted, but such promises "are (if I may so call them) not causal, but declarative, making manifest who be those true believers to whom the life promised in the covenant doth belong." Both absolute and conditional promises flow from the same gracious intent on God's part toward his elect, and the condition itself is wrought by God, being included under the covenant on God's part. Both conditional and absolute promises are given in the gospel, which is by definition "a doctrine of free grace," and the conditions are of a nature which presupposes that a man is already in the covenant by faith.[5] The absolute promise to forgive sins for God's own sake, "intends faith in those in whom it shall be fulfilled." The conditional promise of life to such as believe implies the freeness of grace expressed in the absolute promise. The absolute promise gives the cause, the conditional specifies the object, of God's free saving act. The one gives comfort in time of trials, scruples, and doubts, the other stirs up, in times of security and carelessness, to search for the qualifications expressed; "and though the comfort so tasted [in the absolute] be more sweet and delightful whiles it is felt, yet the assurance which we have by the trial of our graces, is the more constant and durable."[6]

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[5] Gosp. Cov., pp. 327, 335f, cf. 288; Shepard, Cases, pp. 320f.

[6] Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 291ff, 358f.

Conditional promises apply not to gracious acts considered simply as acts, but to such acts reflected upon by an enlightened conscience, in the knowledge that there are graces of sanctification in believers which, by a power derived from Christ, manifest themselves in distinctive ways. Though the conditions are given by Christ, the promises themselves, the ministers insisted, are made to believers as individuals, unto whom "all God's promises are and will be yea and amen." For the declarative function of gracious conditions they could appeal to Christ himself in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Fourth Gospel, and to Paul, neither of whom could be dismissed as "legal preachers."[7] Cotton, who was either unable or unwilling to distinguish between the declarative and causal function of works, insisted that conditional promises are made exclusively to Christ, and fulfilled only in him, and that such promises are merely invitations to "go to Christ" to receive the condition indicated. The elders agreed that the promises of the covenant are made to Christ on behalf of the elect; but they insisted that this fact did not prevent such promises from being made to particular men, also.[8]

(b) Evidence from sanctification

The covenant of grace contains a double promise, corresponding to the double plight of fallen man, who is both guilty and subject to punishment, and is injured in his own

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[7] Shepard, Cases, p. 321; Believer, p. 259; Parable, p. 217; Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 38f, 292.

[8] Ibid., pp. 39ff.

nature. Man is deprived, having lost the reward of blessedness offered to Adam, together with those gracious gifts which enabled Adam to deserve it. Man is also depraved, in that his natural faculties are so corrupted by sin that he is unable to alter his situation. A two-fold restoration, therefore, is necessary; and in the covenant God undertakes for a double remedy. He offers himself "as a God of mercy, to pardon us" (in justification); at the same time he offers himself "as a God over us,...to govern us according to his will."[9] Faith lays hold of both promises; but as the act of faith presupposes a previous infusion of grace, so fulfillment of the second promise presupposes a similar infusion. A man must be made governable by God; God must, as it were, "write his law in our hearts." The second benefit, therefore, which flows from union with Christ, is the conveyance to the believer of supernatural graces of sanctification.

In the orthodox understanding, graces of sanctification reside in the regenerate, and enable the natural human faculties to perform properly. A sanctified "conversation" is properly said to consist of gracious human acts, as opposed to acts of the Spirit. By the power of introspection, moreover, men are privy to the "springs" and ends of their own actions. Saints, therefore, are able to perceive the presence of gracious habits by reflecting on their behavior. In virtue of the double promise of the covenant of grace, they may conclude from works of sanctification to the blessedness of their es-

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[9] Ibid., p. 301.

tates. Such a conclusion is not a "going on in" or a "going aside to a covenant of works," but merely the proving of one benefit of the covenant of grace by another benefit of the same covenant.[10]

The true believer, Shepard declared, may know the blessedness of his estate "by the peculiarness of a work within him." Christ's sheep (after John 10) are those who "know," "hear," and "follow" Christ. This knowing, hearing, and following are effects of the Spirit's work which are peculiar to the elect, and it is in and through these effects that the Spirit's work is known. Even as God's power, wisdom, and goodness are known by their effects in the work of creation, so also the members of the Trinity are known in the work of redemption by their effects, judged according to the revealed word of scripture.[11] This was the premise of orthodox Puritan affirmations about ascertaining one's estate. Though hypocrites may go far to counterfeit saintliness, there is an essential difference between them and saints, which the latter may perceive in themselves by a threefold light from Christ, viz. by the light of the biblical word, by the light of the Spirit interpreting the biblical word, and by "the light of experience and sense."

> For saints have an experimental knowledge of the work of grace, by virtue of which they come to know it as certainly...as by feeling heat, we know fire is hot; by tasting

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[10] E.g., ibid., pp. 167f, 183f, 226, 322f; Shepard, Believer, p. 259; Parable, p. 126.

[11] Parable, pp. 212-217.

honey, we know it is sweet.[12]

This empirical knowledge arises from reflection on one's actions in comparison with the rule of life given in scripture, from the operation of grace, which reveals its presence in the heart, and from tribulations and trials at God's hand, which test and prove a man's saintliness.[13]

Sanctification, inasmuch as it reveals that God has "made our wills like unto his glorious will," is positive evidence of union with Christ at the present moment.[14] It is objective testimony revealing whom in particular God has redeemed. The Father's work of election, wrote Bulkeley, remains hidden until the Son comes and lays down his life, revealing the Father's intent to save some. But who they are is not known until the Spirit comes and sanctifies them. By this work of the Spirit, the very individuals whom God will save are "singled out and marked." Some men would make the free offer of grace to sinners, as they are sinners with no work of grace in them, to be the ground of faith and assurance; and so declare that to look to works of grace is to make works the ground of faith or cause of assurance. To such men Shepard replied that the free offer of grace cannot by itself be such a ground, for it indicates only that a sinner may be beloved.

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[12] Ibid., p. 222, cf. 223.

[13] On the power of reflection and introspection as a distinctively human capacity, v., e.g.: Preston, Life Eternal, II, 167f; Breast-Plate, II, 91f; cf. Ames, Conscience, I.i, ii, viii; II.i; Shepard, Parable, pp. 184, 223, cf. 338f; cf. Sibbes, Salvation Applied, Works, V, 396.

[14] Shepard, Parable, pp. 214ff.

Neither is the receiving of this offer by faith in itself sufficient, for it only shows why a man is beloved. Rather, "the work of sanctification (which is the fruit of our receiving this offer) is the first evidence showing that he is beloved." All three testimonies are mutually related; all three are valid and to be sought after; and the order in which they are experienced is not crucial.[15] It remains, however, that sanctification objectively identifies the elect, revealing that they are actually redeemed.

It was in this sense of an objective identifying mark that sanctification was taken by the elders of the Bay as the "seal of the Spirit." The Hutchinsonians construed this "seal" to be the immediate witness of the Spirit, to the exclusion of "any thing in our selves, whether by faith or by any other grace." Yet if this be the case, Shepard declared, then the Spirit witnesses an untruth; for a man is first a believer, and then justified, called, and sanctified in fact, before the Spirit witnesses to it. Whether the Spirit clears a man's estate was not in question, "but whether by seeking nothing, or showing something."[16]

Sanctification may also be taken as a first evidence of justification,--often must be so taken,--because it is more readily manifest than the latter. Justification is the divine sentence declaring a man pardoned of sin, and it is pronounced

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[15] Gosp. Cov., p. 232, cf. 228; Shepard, Cases, p. 320; Thes. Sabb., pp. 132f; cf. Norton, Orth. Ev., p. 87.

[16] Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 234f; Shepard, Parable, pp. 224, 464; cf. Thes. Sabb., pp. 128-133; Believer, p. 229.

in both the court of heaven and the court of conscience. "By the first we are justified indeed from personal guilt, by the second we feel ourselves justified by the removal of conscience guilt."[17] The first is instantaneous, complete, and unchangeable, but the second may not be felt for some time, and is not constant when it is felt. Justification pertains only to a man's relationship to God. Sanctification, as a positive change in a man's person, by its very nature is more readily perceived.

> [O]ur justification is an act of God without us, God not imputing to us our iniquities; but our sanctification is an inward work wrought in a man's own bowels, of which he hath (and can not but have) a sensible feeling in himself.[18]

How shall we know that "we have passed from death to life"? The Spirit in the word is plain: "Because we love the brethren" (1 John 3.14, the locus classicus for the doctrine).

The evidential connection between justification and sanctification derives ultimately from the divinely ordained order of regeneration, in which the two are inseparably connected. Suppose, Shepard suggested, you lie on your deathbed, comforting yourself in your elected and justified estate, and the Spirit comes and wrestles with your conscience and says, If you are justified you are also called and sanctified. Is it so with you?

> If thou sayest thou art not sanctified, the word and Spirit will bear witness then against thee, and say, Then thou art not elected nor justified; if thou sayest thou

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[17] Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 238f.

[18] Ibid., pp. 233f.

> knowest not, thou lookest not to sanctification, or fruits of the Spirit, they will then reply, How then canst thou say that thou art elected or justified? for it is a truth as clear as the sun, and as immovable as heaven and earth, none are elected and justified, but they are also sanctified, and they that are not sanctified are not justified (Rom. 8.[29f]).[19]

There is a necessary connection between sanctification and justification, rooted in the immutable will of God, such that the one cannot be present without the other. How may a man know for a certainty that his sins are forgiven him? "A plainer evidence," declared Bulkeley, "I cannot give than this..., scil., a careful, conscionable, and constant endeavor to walk in covenant with God."[20]

But how shall a man know whether he is truly sanctified? Did not the urging of sanctification as an evidence merely beg this further question? To Cotton's mind such was indeed the case. Sanctification may help to evidence justification, but only if the Spirit has previously apprised a man of his justification, and that his sanctification is true. Sanctification must be thus "evident" before it can be an evidence, and it is at best a supporting evidence. The elders agreed that works of sanctification, as works, may be deceptive. There is "a kind of outward sanctification (improperly so called)," an external reformation to which a man may attain under constraint of the law. But this is something qualitatively different from true sanctification.

> For though this reformation doth and may come from some inward work of the Spirit of God upon the spirit and soul

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[19] Believer, p. 261.

[20] Gosp. Cov., p. 172.

> of man, as namely to convince and terrify the conscience, to stir the affections, and to awe the will also, so that a man dares not commit the things he would, yet the mind and will is still unrenewed, the frame and disposition of the heart is still the same as it was before.[21]

For the elders the decisive factor in sanctification was a matter of "frame" and "disposition." The mere fact that a man obeyed the commandments meant little, but rather how and why he obeyed them. What is significant about works of sanctification, so far as their evidential value is concerned, is not their being, but their quality.

Right, sincere, and sound sanctification, Bulkeley declared, involves the entire man, both substance and faculties. It frames the heart to close with the whole will of God, and to refuse comfort from anything apart from God. It makes the sanctified wary of sin and desirous of living wholly for God. True sanctification disposes a person to seek the society of those who are truly holy, and to aspire after communion with God himself; and it makes him keenly aware of his own want of grace and dependence on Christ for strength.[22] Those who have passed from death to life may know it, if not intuitively, then by reflective examination of their behavior. The truly sanctified render universal obedience to God, simply because they delight to do so. The end of their obedience is God's glory, and the source of it is the power of grace. Though outwardly a man may deceive the keenest observer, these are the touchstones by which he may know in his conscience whether

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[21] Ibid., pp. 226f.

[22] Ibid., pp. 235-240; cf. Ames, Conscience, II.v.

he is only a "close hypocrite."

In their insistence on the evidential significance of evangelical obedience, and in specifying the content and scope of such obedience as the whole will of God, Puritans were but applying to the problem of assurance the traditional Reformed doctrine of the "third use" of the moral law. After the fall, it was held, the moral law, written by God in men's hearts at creation, and recapitulated in the decalogue, serves (first) to restrain sin by fear of punishment, and (second) to drive men to Christ by convicting them of sin, and by convincing them of the futility of salvation apart from Christ. For the redeemed this same moral law (in the third place) remains in force as the rule by which those in Christ are to walk.[23] Christian life and divine law, understood as God's unchanging will for man, are necessarily connected. Christians are not under the law as a covenant, as Adam was; perfect obedience is not the condition of life on our part. Nonetheless, obedience is incumbent upon Christians as a "duty consequent to life," out of thankfulness, and out of that devotion to the divine will which necessarily issues from the presence of love of Christ in the heart. Conscience is subject to the law as the rule of sanctification, "as thy copy to write after and to imitate, and aspire after that perfection it requires."[24]

To be in covenant with God, therefore, is to be under the government of God's law, which is, in fact, the rule of that

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[23] E.g., Shepard, Believer, pp. 275ff.

[24] Ibid., pp. 275-279; v. Parable, I.ix.1.

new obedience to which men are obligated under the covenant of grace. God, on his part, undertakes to enable his own to render obedience. Those whom the Lord takes as his covenant-people "he frames...into a willing and voluntary subjection unto him." Accordingly, if a man can be moved to good actions only by constraint, it is a sign that he is not subject to God's gracious government. Moreover, if we are governed by God, "we must yield him universal obedience in all things." God's government cannot coexist with "some darling lust" of man's. "If thou hast thy exceptions, and reservations, and wilt not yield universal obedience, then art thou an alien from God and his covenant."[25] True sanctification sanctifies the whole man, body and soul, and "forms the heart" to embrace the whole will of God without exception. The truly sanctified labor willingly in duties of holiness toward God, and in duties of love and righteousness towards men. The two realms are inseparable, and there is no distinction between "saints" and "others" in respect of duties owed.[26] A man's obedience must be comprehensive, unqualified, and it must leaven everything he does.

> Holiness of disposition, will as naturally put a Christian upon duties of holiness, prayer, and meditation, and other spiritual exercises, as a sinful disposition doth put us upon acts that are sinful.... [Moreover] holiness planted in the heart will cause holiness to shine forth in our actions of common life, so that though the things we deal in be but outward and civil; yet our manner of dealing in them shall be spiritual and holy.... [W]hom God hath sanctified, they do sanctify to themselves the common and

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[25] Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 153f.

[26] Ibid., pp. 235f; Shepard, Parable, pp. 335f.

> ordinary actions of this life, by using them not in an ordinary prophane manner, but holily;... If we eat, holiness causes us to eat before God, and to eat for God.... If we exercise our selves in our calling, holiness directs a Christian to refer it to the glory of God.[27]

The foregoing passage indicates what Bulkeley meant by "universal obedience." Such obedience is, in fact, that comprehensive ars Deo vivendi which was the practical focus of the ellipse of Puritan theology. The order of regeneration, which begins in the eternal counsel of God before time (the other focus of the theological ellipse), ends (as far as earthly life is concerned) in joyful, willing, obedient (though imperfect) reference of all a man's doing to God who is Creator and Redeemer.

True sanctification, however, is discerned not only in acceptance of the whole moral law as the rule of life, but also in the end for which the law is accepted. As a beloved son and a hired servant may do the same work, but from different motives, so believers in Christ and those out of Christ may obey the law for diverse reasons. The latter, being under the covenant of works, are bound to obey in order to live, and have only fear of punishment and hope of reward to motivate them. Believers, in contrast, are "bound to do, because they live," and are moved by the Father's love and the Savior's mercy. True believers serve God; hypocrites serve their own ends. Indeed, the change in heart wrought in sanctification may properly be defined in terms of "the change of a man's

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[27] Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 376f; cf. Shepard, Believer, pp. 280ff.

utmost end."[28] As the pollution of fallen man, and of all his civil, moral, and religious actions, consists primarily in self-seeking and in making himself his chief end, so sanctification "consists chiefly and appears in making the Lord our utmost end of all we do."

Hypocrites and saints, accordingly, are infallibly distinguished by the ends which they serve. Hypocrites perform any duty ultimately to ease their own consciences, and therein please themselves by seeking to please the Lord. They desire only to obtain pardon and to escape the wrath of the law. When Christ was on earth, "some did receive [him] to be king, but it was that he might be their cook; he provided loaves for them; so here."[29] The regenerate, in contrast, love Christ "for himself, whereby the Lord only is exalted." God causes his own to seek the same ends that he, in governing his creation, propounds to himself, so that "God's ends and our ends meet in one, which is the glorifying of his Name." If a man closes with the whole law as his happiness and utmost end because it is God's will and because God is glorified in his obedience,--"then thou art...a man after God's own heart, thy thoughts are God's thoughts, thy intents and ends the same with God's ends. Take this therefore as a pledge of his grace towards thee."[30]

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[28] Shepard, Thes. Sabb., p. 111; Parable, pp. 303f, 333f.

[29] Parable, I.v.2, and pp. 49, 203, 336-339.

[30] Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 154f, 78; Shepard, Parable, pp. 336f.

True works of sanctification, finally, are distinguished by the power from which they are wrought, whether in the strength of grace from Christ or in the strength of one's own abilities. A man's lamp burns in profession, prayers, reformation, etc., but what is it that feeds the flame? The case is similar to that of Christ's own mighty works. Others did miracles besides Christ? How is it proved that he is Christ?

> It is answered, in all his miraculous works we are to consider not only quid fecit, i.e., what he did, but qua virtute fecit, from what power he did. The apostles and others did miracles, but it was aliena virtute; Christ did them, but it was propria virtute. So many an unsound heart, he may do greater works than saints, and his lamp burn brighter. Therefore, in this case, we are not to look so much to what is done, as from what power and principle it is done; for therein the best hypocrite ever fails.[31]

In judging the soundness of works of sanctification, a man shall ask, "From what power" do they spring? and conscience, which is privy to the springs, as well as the ends, of a person's actions, is competent to answer.

Fallen men naturally seek to have a righteousness of their own to carry before God, and to have it from themselves. They characteristically "glory in" and "go in the strength of" their own powers, gifts and performances, and comfort themselves that they "do as much as they can." They may be stimulated by outward example, by public applause, by the prospect of material blessings, by the desires of natural conscience, by fear of death and hell. They may strive by the power of created nature, of immediate (and transitory) actings of the

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[31] Ibid., p. 282.

Spirit, and of gifts of common grace. But in all these there is no abiding gracious power, no new principle of life within.[32] Believers, in contrast, are actuated by the life of Christ as an inward principle. They share in this life mediately by faith, and it resides in them by the Spirit's power working mediately in created graces. By faith believers are emptied of their own righteousness and behold life laid up in Christ; by the power of the Spirit dwelling in them they are enabled to live unto God in all things. In a truly gracious estate "there is an infinite circle. A man by thirsting receives, and receiving, thirsts for more." If a man has made a good profession, therefore, and has "a name to live in the judgment of all the church," he must still search his heart,

> and see from what principle is proceeds; for, if this be wanting all is nothing. As he that had beer given him, when milk and wine and sugar were put into it to mend it, said, the wine is good, and the milk is good, but the beer is bad; so profession, affection is good, but the heart, the man, is bad.[33]

The Hutchinsonians complained that the elders of the Bay subverted the gratuity of the covenant of grace by insisting that men take comfort from the sight of gracious works in themselves. The elders rejoined that the Hutchinsonians, by limiting the ground of assurance to the immediate witness of the Spirit, left would-be saints dangerously at the mercy of feelings, fancies, and excited states of the natural affections, and ignored altogether those objective means to assur-

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[32] Ibid., pp. 37, 282-288; Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., p. 78.

[33] Shepard, Parable, pp. 36, 100f, 282, 288f; Cases, p. 329; cf. Preston, New Covenant, p. 391.

ance which are ordained by God and plainly declared in scripture. Natural affections, it was recalled, may be excited readily enough by natural means, such as eating and drinking. People may be stimulated by the novelty of the gospel and by a "thundering preacher" without any increase in grace. In this connection, Shepard approvingly cited Ames' alleged remark that "Arminian universal grace (as they describe it) may be the effect of a good dinner sometimes." A man may have sudden pangs of feeling, and flashes of affection for Christ, and still not be sound in the bent and disposition of his whole soul. A carnal heart may turn old affections to a new object, even as "the same eye may see the sun and a dunghill, and the eye [be] not changed." If a man's faith of assurance depends on his feelings of "such and such graces and heavenly impressions of God's Spirit," and "assurances of favor" in himself, then his assurance is no more constant than such feelings are.[34]

The elders agreed that the witness of the Spirit enables a man to know whether his justification is sure and his sanctification sound. The question at issue, however, was by what means of objective word and sensible work the Spirit in fact bears witness. In the case of justification, it is, the ministers insisted, by the call of Christ in the biblical word, If you believe and come to Christ, there is peace and pardon. Subjective feelings inevitably are prey to the vagaries, doubts, fears, and presumptions of the human spirit; but God's

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[34] Shepard, Cases, p. 329; Parable, pp. 323f.

call, command, and invitation to come to Christ is clear, sure, unchanging, and objective as the biblical text is objective. "If God should speak from heaven to you to come to his Son, it is not so sure a ground as the call of God from out of the oracle of his word."[35] The same is the case with sanctification. To ascertain whether it be true, "you need not go to heaven for it: 'the word is nigh thee.' Those that love Christ: who are those? 'Those that keep his commandments.'"[36] The Spirit alone seals the elect, but he also "commands the elect not to sit idle and dream of the Spirit," but with all diligence to make their election sure. Dream they may, but at the risk of founding their assurance on fancy.[37]

> Would we then know whether we be of the number of those that are saved by the blood of Christ? we need not for this ascend up into heaven, to search the book of God's election, nor need we go down into the lower parts of the earth, for any there to tell us that we are delivered thence; but go down in to our own hearts, and if we find this work of sanctification there wrought, then what Moses said of Israel, "Blessed art thou O Israel, a people saved by the Lord," the same may be truly said of us; Our salvation is begun, we have the seal of it, the earnest, the first fruits, which shall at length bring the full possession of the whole harvest.[38]

The foregoing passage from Bulkeley epitomizes the elder's position regarding the knowledge of justification. All of the relevant data for trying a man's estate fall within the scope of the natural human capacity for perception and reflection;

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[35] Shepard, Believer, pp. 229f.

[36] Shepard, Parable, p. 222.

[37] Ibid., p. 78.

[38] Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., p. 235, cf. pp. 292f.

and human conscience, instructed by the Spirit in the word, is competent to draw the appropriate conclusions, wholly within the moral and ontological orders of creation. Sanctification inheres in the regenerate, and the regenerate may perceive its effects in themselves: Personal sanctification reveals who are objects of the eternal decree of election, and demonstrates that the decree has in fact been executed upon them. Works of sanctification are specified in scripture as the signs by which the regenerate are to be known, and as the qualifications to which conditional promises are made. Therefore, the elders maintained, "to give sanctification for a ground or evidence of justification" is not a "going on in a covenant of works," but only an evidencing of a blessed estate by the effects of it in one's person, viz. of God's love toward oneself by one's own sincere love toward the brethren.

In the elders' estimation, the order of regeneration necessarily includes created instrumentalities, operating according to their proper natures toward the end intended by God from eternity, viz. the regeneration of particular elect sinners. In this order, the sinner's own natural faculties of intellection and volition participate, and the sinner himself is graciously reborn in empirically ascertainable ways. The covenant of grace is made with particular men, who enter into it knowingly and willingly, and who are renewed in their own natures according to the terms of the covenant on God's part. In virtue of the covenant-bond, a soul may plead with God to fulfill his part by granting further assurance and increase of grace, and the soul may be exhorted to fulfill its part by

rendering renewed obedience to God in religious and civil life. In virtue of the double promise of the covenant,--to pardon and to renew,--the soul may conclude from the sincerity of its religious and ethical observance to the certainty of its pardon. The crucial term in the syllogism is "sincerity," of which conscience is a competent judge. The certainty of salvation is founded ultimately in God's sovereign power, yet in accomplishing salvation God channels his power through means appropriate to the objects of it. The order of regeneration, both in respect of the being and causes of rebirth, and in respect of the seeing or apprehending of it, is accommodated to the nature of reasonable creatures. In the covenant of grace there is a genuine, gracious (and therefore doctrinally legitimate) commerce between man and God. Regeneration, finally, is accomplished in accordance with the moral order established by God at creation in the covenant of works. Between the covenant of works and of grace there is, in effect, a continuity of both form and substance. This continuity is the subject of the next two chapters.

Chapter 9: The Immutability of the Covenant of Works

Puritans looked upon theology as a body of knowledge instructing men in the art of ordering their lives according to God's will. Theology, in Perkins' phrase, is "a science of living well and blessedly forever." It is, according to Ames, "the doctrine of living unto God."[1] The theological task began, therefore, with elucidation of the divine will contained in scripture, nature, and events, and culminated in applying it to the daily life of particular men. The Puritan sermon characteristically opened with a "doctrine" founded on a biblical text, and ended with "uses" in which the implications of the theological dictum for religious and ethical life were "drawn out" and applied to the concrete situation of the hearers. It is indicative of Puritan preoccupation with this "practical" character of theology that Ames' own summa was not a "summa theologiae" in the traditional sense of an exhaustive exposition of articles of faith, but rather a monumental elaboration of the "observance" incumbent on Christians. "Observance" Ames defined as "the submissive performance of the will of God for the glory of God," and he construed it broadly to include domestic economy, morality, politics, economics, and lawmaking.[2] Seldom, if ever, in Western history has there

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[1] Perkins, Golden Chain (1626), I, 10; Ames, Marrow (1642), I.i.1.

[2] Conscience, with the Power and Cases Thereof, divided into five Books (London, 1643); first published as De conscientia et eius iure vel casibus (Amsterdam, 1630); Marrow, tr. J. D. Eusden (Boston, 1968), II.i.1, I.i.12.

appeared a generation of men so passionately concerned to incarnate in their private and public lives the will, and therein to reflect the glory, of God who is the beginning and end of all things.

Underlying and supporting this practical emphasis in Puritan divinity were a series of (technically) theological convictions concerning the ground, nature, and end of "observance." That universal obedience which was the substance of Puritan piety and the object of Puritan preaching, was acknowledged to be necessarily the fruit of a regenerate heart. "There can be no vital actions brought forth," Ames declared, "unless a principle of life be first begotten within."[3] Sanctification in this life presupposes an order of causes, and a sequence of events, which flow from God's intention to glorify himself in the creation, just reprobation, and merciful redemption of men. The will of God presented as injunction leads necessarily to the will of God considered as absolute volition; and theology, which addresses human vitality in the present moment, leads forward and backward (like the very being of the present moment) to the being of God who is Alpha and Omega, from whom and to whom are all things. "All creatures in the world," wrote Shepard, "are of God, and for God, so that, being of him, they receive their being from him as their first efficient, and being for him, are therefore preserved and governed by him as their utmost end."[4] The exist-

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[3] Marrow (1642), I.ii.5.

[4] Thes. Sabb., I.3.

ence of the creature,--in respect both of its being and of the ends which it serves,--is a coming from and a "reflux and return" back unto God who is Uncaused Cause, Pure Act, Necessary Being, and who, in respect of all outside of himself, is preeminently Absolute Will.[5] The creation and its history, including the order of redemption and (within that order) God's covenant with man, are to be referred to a divine volition which, in its nature, is consistent with the divine nature, and, in its content, is suited to human nature.

It is at this point,--viz. of the nature of the divine will and of its self-accommodation to the creature's capacities,--that the issues of the New-England Antinomian Controversy are implicated. The covenant was seen by orthodox Puritans to be made between God who is unconditioned will, and man who is by nature a "cause by counsel," i.e., who is able rationally to project ends and to frame means for their pursuit. According to the terms of the covenant of works, viz. obedience to the moral law, man incurs an invarying obligation to fulfill the divine will as it respects human action. In this obligation, man's place is fixed in what was earlier referred to (Chapter 1) as the "deontological order" of creation. In entering into a mutual agreement with man, to which man willingly consents, God acts in accordance with man's created nature as a reasonable creature. In this divine self-accommodation, the ontological order of creation is affirmed and respected. John Cotton, in his insistence on the priority of

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[5] Ibid., th. 4.

the Spirit's operation in all phases of regeneration (including the evidencing of it), excluded created nature from an instrumental, mediatory role in the work of regeneration. In so doing, Cotton drew an improper distinction between covenant of works and covenant of grace, and, in effect, called into question that respect for the ontological order which is reflected in the Puritan conception of the covenant of works. In rejecting the evidential value of works of sanctification, Cotton appeared to call into question not only the instrumental role of created things, but also the continued validity of the moral law for the regenerate. In effect he introduced a dichotomy into the moral order. If, in fact, the objective holiness of the saints is so tenuous that sanctification can be discerned only by the Spirit's testimony, and if Christ must "act" sanctifying graces for us, then in what sense, it might be asked, may the regenerate be required to strive to obey the moral law? Out-and-out Antinomians rejected categorically all human activity in conversion,--before (in preparation), during (in believing), and after (in sanctification). They also rejected the preparatory function of the moral law before conversion, and its regulatory function for the regenerate after conversion; and on this basis they tended to draw an absolute distinction, productive of separatism, between those "in" and those "outside of" Christ. In these respects they carried to the limit the Cottonian tendencies just mentioned.

Fundamentally at issue between the Hutchinsonians and the elders in Massachusetts Bay, was the extent to which God, in

translating men into the life of heaven, respects and employs those orders of being and morality which comprise the substance and the rule of earthly life. In the Puritan theological scheme the covenant of works served as a means of restraining the antinomian tendency to disregard the created orders, as a means, that is, of maintaining proper tension in the dialectic of God's sovereign freedom and man's liberty and integrity. To the extent that Cotton and the Hutchinsonians insisted that God, in the covenant of grace, treats with man in a totally different manner than he does in the covenant of works, they collapsed this dialectic onto the divine pole and called into question the continuity of God's dealing in the two covenants. Ironically, however, in doing this the Hutchinsonians laid themselves open to the same charge which they levelled at the elders, viz. of going on in a covenant of works. Their opponents argued that Antinomians, although they claimed to be exalting God's freedom, were in fact pretentiously disregarding the revealed order of regeneration, so that they might appear religious themselves and keep their own carnal pleasures in the bargain. It was in this sense that they were said to open up a "fair and easy way to heaven."[6]

From the elders' point of view, Antinomians could not do otherwise; for, given the presuppositions about the nature of God with which Protestant Orthodoxy began, there is, in the very nature of the case, no possibility of overcoming, to the

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[6] Shepard, Parable, pp. 191f, 462, cf. 78f, 250f; cf. Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 79f. V. above, pp. 94f.

extent that Antinomianism implied, the ontological and moral distinction between Creator and creature, not even in the state of glory. Having created men as rational agents, and having promulgated a rule by which they are to be governed, God is bound to deal with men accordingly, and not as he might with "brutes or stones" who have neither understanding nor volition. To say, without qualification, that the Spirit "acts" believers, was to suggest that believers do not act themselves, implying either that their human integrity is violated, or that a Person of the Trinity has assumed human nature. The first implication was plainly erroneous, the second simply blasphemous. To assert flatly that believers are "not under the law," or are "not to act from a command," was to suggest that the law, given at creation as the rule of God's dealings with men, is abrogated or fundamentally altered, implying that believers are freed from the moral obligations incumbent on men as men, or that the rule which governs the saints in heaven differs essentially from that which was laid down at the beginning of the world. These implications, too, were erroneous. God being what he is, and having done in creation what he has done, he is constrained to act thereafter, even unto glorification of the saints in heaven, in a manner which is essentially continuous. Expressing the matter in slightly different terms, one may say that the question in dispute between the elders and the Hutchinsonians (including Cotton) concerned the very nature of the covenant of grace, and of its relationship to the covenant of works.

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This interpretation of the issues in the New-England Antinomian Controversy follows from the observation that the covenant of works is the governing conception of Puritan federal theology. The ground for this observation is the subject of this and the succeeding chapters. The argument may be sketched here, by way of introduction.

In Puritan theology the covenant of works appears as the paradigm of God's salvific relationship with men, a circumstance which follows from the way in which the relationship between God's power and his will is understood. In eternity, before there was anything outside of himself, God determined upon what may be called the "order of redemption," viz. that sequence of causes and events which issues in the glorification of certain men, and the damnation of others. In this order of redemption, the covenant of works precedes and is the foundation of, and also provides the pattern for, the covenant of grace. In the covenant of works, God at creation agreed with mankind on the conditions of an eternal reward, in the accomplishment of which God himself would be glorified, and men would enjoy a felicity for which they are uniquely fitted. The covenant of works is the means by which God leads men to their appointed end; it is the concrete historical device by which God executes his eternal decree respecting the destinies of men. The covenant, in other words, is the form of God's "special government" of reasonable creatures, which is called "special" because it is peculiarly suited to the created nature and appointed end of thinking, willing agents. Though mankind failed to fulfill the covenant of works, and cannot

(since Adam's fall) ever fulfill it, it continues nonetheless in force, inasmuch as it is God's ordained means to his intended end respecting man, from which God will not deviate. The condition of the covenant of works must be satisfied if men are to obtain felicity, and the form of God's salvific relationship with men remains that of a covenant, i.e., of a mutual transaction involving consent on man's part. In this respect the covenant of works may be said to be on the ground-floor, so to speak, of Puritan federal theology.

The theological loci which yield the point of departure for this assertion are those which treat of God as he is in himself, and as he is related to creatures. The loci which treat of the moral law and of the work of Christ provide supporting evidence. To these matters we now turn, keeping for the most part within the corpus of New-England divinity.

(a) Constancy of God's "ordinate power"

In opposition to Roman Catholics, who rejected the possibility of assurance of salvation in this life, and to Arminians, who implied that the elect might fall from grace, orthodox Puritans insisted that certitude of one's salvation was indeed attainable short of heaven. The intense, characteristic Puritan concern for knowledge of one's estate in grace, which is apparent in the New-England Antinomian Controversy, was founded upon this conviction. Yet this conviction was in turn based upon another, touching the nature of the order of redemption and of the God who established it. For orthodox Protestants (both Lutheran and Reformed) the final ground of

personal assurance was confidence in the immutability of God's determination to save, and in the sufficiency of God's power to accomplish his intent,--in both respects utterly independent of an individual's powers of cooperation or resistance. Final responsibility for salvation (but not responsibility altogether) was taken out of man's hands and lodged with God, who was held to be alone able to accomplish it. The obviously miserable success of Adam and his entire posterity in obeying the divine law was regarded as sufficient ground for rejection of the suggestion that a man might take upon himself any responsibility for effecting his own salvation. The possibility of personal assurance is, and must be, rooted ultimately in God's faithfulness to his own salvific intent, and in his inherent ability to carry out that intent. The possibility of knowing one's estate is rooted in the constancy of the means by which God in fact performs what he intends. This is the "practical" significance of the doctrines which treat of God as he is in himself. Both the divine faithfulness and the divine constancy are rooted in the very nature of God.

God's essence, wrote Norton, absolutely considered, is "that one pure and mere act, by which God is God."[7] Men necessarily apprehend God in many acts, and think of God in terms of multiple attributes; but the attributes are in truth but one and the same divine perfection, and the acts are in truth one and the same divine act. The distinctions are merely apparent,--artifacts of finite human cognition and reflection.

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[7] Orth. Ev., p. 2.

In himself, as perfect and necessary being, "God is pure and simple act, without all composition." God is one. From the oneness and simplicity of the divine essence it follows that whatever is in God is God, that whatever God wills he wills from eternity and always wills, and that he wills "simply, absolutely, and independently." In respect of his being, God is without beginning, succession, or end, and is utterly independent of anything outside of himself. There is no necessary connection between the being of creatures and the being of God. Likewise, in respect of his will, God is unchanging and altogether unconditioned by anything extrinsic to himself. Strictly speaking, he wills everything ad extra in a single, comprehensive, constant, eternal volition. Conversely, all created things are entirely dependent for their possibility and their actuality upon God as Necessary Being and First Cause, and as Supreme Volition. Considered in himself, God may be said to be everything, containing all things actually and potentially: "that which is increated, essentially; that which is created, to be created, or possible to be created, [immanently]."[8] Everything that is, is by God's power, and is according to God's idea of it in his own "mind"; and it is in God's mind ideally from eternity.

But what, it may be asked, is the relationship between the divine idea and the divine power, in respect of the actual world? Everything in creation, insofar as it is, is to be referred to God's power. Insofar as it is what it is, it is to

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[8] Ibid., pp. 5, 7, 9, 51, 91ff.

be referred to the divine mind. Viewed in itself, God's power is sufficient to effect anything that he may conceive as long as it is not in itself logically contradictory. (God cannot, e.g., cause a thing to be and not-be at the same time.) Herein consists the divine "sufficiency." Yet the actual creation, including the order of redemption, does not exhaust this sufficiency. God might have done things differently, without encountering the limit of logical impossibility. Why is this particular set of possibilities in fact realized? Not, it was insisted, because of any inadequacy of the divine power, or because of any external necessity imposed upon the divine will. The existing state of affairs results, rather, from a free determination on God's part to actualize a certain set of possibilities, from which, having so determined, he cannot now depart. All things outside of God exist solely by his "mere good pleasure."[9] What is, is because God wills it.

Reflecting on the divine activity ad extra, scholastic theologians traditionally subordinated God's power (as manifest in the actual order of things) to his will, and distinguished between potentia dei absoluta and potentia dei ordinata sive actualis.[10] The first refers to God's power considered in itself, as unlimited, by which "he is able to do all things that are possible, though he never do them." The second refers to God's power as "ordinate, and limited by his decree, and revealed will: according to which God having freely

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[9] V. ibid., pp. 18, 53f.

[10] E.g., Ames, Medulla, I.vi.18.

bounded himself, changes not, being immutable." "Though God be omnipotent, yet he is not omnivolent; that is, though God can do whatsoever he pleaseth, yet God is not pleased to do whatsoever he can." To which it must be added that God's will is not fickle. Having once determined to act in a manner appropriate to his intended end, and having once declared himself, God does not deviate from his course. "There can no more be a new thought, a new intent, or a new purpose in God," Norton declared, "than there can be a new God."[11]

Everything that is, or shall be, that has occurred or shall occur, from the instant of creation to the moment of final dissolution, is comprehended by God simultaneously in a single volitional act "in the moment of eternity" before any thing had any existence outside of the divine essence. The object of the decree is the creature in its condition of possibility, as falling within the compass of the divine sufficiency. The divine efficiency comprises God's actual bringing-forth and working all that he has willed, according as he has willed it. It is the carrying-into-effect of the single immanent act of the eternal decree, in a series of transient acts, extrinsic to God and having duration in time.[12] In his efficiency God proceeds according as he has previously determined, and so his efficient power is said to be "ordinate."[13]

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[11] Orth. Ev., pp. 15, 19, 51, 139; cf. Ames, Marrow (1642), I.vi.16-20; cf. Shepard, Thes. Sabb., I.18f, 23, 28.

[12] Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 51f, 56, 101, 126.

[13] At this point one may take issue with Eusden's reading of ordinata (Ames, Medulla, I.vi.18) as ordinans on the ground that what is important for A. is God's certain, present

The end of the eternal, comprehensive decree is God himself, in particular as his glory is to be manifested "in a way of justice upon the reprobate, [and] in a way of justice tempered with mercy upon the elect."[14] Election, the creation of man as mutable, the giving of the moral law, the permission of sin, the atoning work of Christ, the just reprobation of certain men, and the gratuitous justification of other men,--these are the means to God's overarching end; and the bulk of formal Puritan theology is devoted, in one degree or another, to elucidating these "means." The divine efficiency, which pertains to the execution of the decree, is taken as comprising creation of the world and "providence." Providence encompasses God's continued sustenance of the creature in being, and his governing of the creature's actions according to an

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redemptive power toward and among men, as against an "abstract hypothesis" that God can do whatever he wills (pp. 23f). I agree in regard to A.'s emphasis, but would suggest that A. devotes the burden of Bk. I (beginning with ch. viii) precisely to this aspect of the divine efficiency as it is experienced in all its richness by men. This material properly belongs where A. places it, viz. under the rubrics of the divine providentia and gubernatio, which pertain to the actualization of the decree. In the passage in question (I.vi.18ff), A. is concerned in the abstract with the determination of the divine efficiency in respect of God considered in himself. Everything which belongs to God's continuing action in the present to restore, redeem, comfort, and protect is the effect of God's power, and is referable to the prior decree, which implication is properly conveyed by the passive participle. In any case, the biblical citation (Eph. 3.20) which Eusden adduces from A. in support of his reading, occurs in the text in the paragraph concerning God's absolute power (vi.19). What appears to men as God's abundant resourcefulness in meeting contingencies in the Heilsgeschichte, pertains not to God's power considered in itself, but to his power as determined by the eternal decree, which encompasses the entire Heilsgeschichte and all its contingencies.

[14] Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 56f.

appropriate rule. The moral law, given at creation, is the rule by which reasonable creatures (angels and men) are governed, and the instrument of their government is the covenant of works. By means of law and covenant, men are led to their respective ends (glorification and reprobation), according as God orders them "with such relation to the moral law, as containeth them in the acknowledgement thereof by way of obedience, or in the case of disobedience, subjects them unto the curse annexed." Christ's work and the giving of the covenant of grace are understood as necessary and harmonious links in the succession of "means" which lead to the grand end for which God undertook the work of creation in the first place.[15]

In the covenant of works, at creation, the terms of God's government were established. God agreed with Adam to reward perfect obedience on the part of mankind with eternal bliss, and appropriately to punish the contrary. The covenant of works was a transaction suited to man's capacity as created, viz. as a rational agent, as a perceptive, reflective, consenting being, and as having the moral law "written in his heart," i.e., knowing it fully and being empowered by superadded graces to perform it.[16] In the covenant God became obliged to man in the only way in which he may possibly become debtor to a creature, viz. by voluntary condescension.[17]

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[15] Ibid., pp. 102ff, 104, 78f, 82f; cf. Ames, Marrow (1642), I.xi, x.

[16] E.g., Shepard, Thes. Sabb., I.21.

[17] Norton, Orth. Ev., p. 58; cf. Norton, The Sufferings of Christ (London, 1653), p. 2.

(Obedience is rewarded because of God's decision to accept it, not because of any commensurate worthiness inhering in the obedient act; the covenant of works remains an expression of God's sovereignty.) The moral law is God's perfect and universal rule for human behavior, and in the covenant of works mankind acquired an unalterable obligation to fulfill it. Having once ordained this means to his self-glorifying end, God is unalterably committed to it by the simplicity of his nature, and the consequent immutability of his will. Potentia dei ordinata, the form of God's salvific relationship with men is necessarily a covenant, and the moral law remains the standard by which God is bound to reward or to condemn mankind.[18] The balance of the order of redemption, encompassing the restoration of fallen men, unfolds as a consequence of these givens.

(b) Continuity of the moral law

"The law" in Puritan discourse, as it pertains to the order of redemption, may refer (loosely) to the Old Testament in which the gospel is proclaimed and administered in and through the Mosaic legal observance. More specifically, the phrase may refer to the moral and ceremonial duties which are the stuff of "salvation by works," being contrasted with the "promises" of the gospel. The phrase "the law of works" refers to the rule by which men are saved under the covenant of works, in contrast to "the law of faith," the rule of salva-

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[18] E.g., Shepard, Parable, p. 125; Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 14f; Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 369f.

tion under the covenant of grace. (In the former we are obliged to "do in order that we may live," in the latter to "believe in order that we may receive life.") Strictly and most inclusively, "the law" refers to the moral law which comprises the divine will as it respects human action as such, and which was given by God in the Garden, being subsequently published by Moses in the wilderness, and by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount.[19] It is with this basic and inclusive sense of "law" that we are here concerned.

The eternal decree (voluntas dei decreti), which determines what shall be done, is God's rule for himself. His command delivered in the moral law, which shows what ought to be done by the creature, is the rule for mankind. God's will as injunction (voluntas dei mandati) is the standard of human action, in reference to which sin and obedience are reckoned.[20] The moral law, strictly taken, is "that universal and perpetual rule of manners teaching how man should be ordered, disposed, qualified, conformed, and (if we may so speak) mannered towards God and man."[21] This rule is peculiarly suited to men as rational beings, and to the ends to which God desires to direct them. The moral law in fact prescribes the substance of that holiness which constitutes the image of God in which

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[19] V., e.g., Norton, Suff. of Christ, pp. 177f, 182f; Shepard, Thes. Sabb., I.17, 30, 110; Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 294f, 328f.

[20] Shepard, Thes. Sabb., th. 19, 91; Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 14f, 80f, 115-118, cf. 92.

[21] Norton, Suff. of Christ, p. 179.

man was created. All creatures, inasmuch as they exist, resemble God as he is a being. But they do not all resemble him "sub ratione boni moralis, i.e., as he is holy, just, and good, in himself, the rule of which resemblance is the moral law."[22] The law which Adam knew in his heart at creation is the standard of that conformity to God which is required of reasonable creatures.

It was with respect to this knowledge and power that God entered the covenant of works with Adam, in which perfect legal obedience was made the condition of eternal bliss. The law considered in itself is the God-given rule of human life, and is applicable in all times and places. It is also the rule of the covenant of works, in which mankind incurred the risk of eternal punishment for failure to obey. As the law itself is perpetual and constant, so the obedience required in the covenant of works is perpetual, and remains the same after the fall, as before it; and man's restoration remains contingent upon fulfilling the terms of the covenant of works.[23] At the very foundation of the world that moral order was established which is to guide men in their relations with each other and with God. In the giving of the law and the striking of the legal covenant the "scenario" was set up for man's fall and subsequent redemption, and the conditions of that redemption were determined. From this perspective the Mosaic law

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[22] Shepard, Thes. Sabb., I.15ff, 99; 17, cf. 40; Norton, Suff. of Christ, pp. 177, 188.

[23] Ibid., pp. 177f, 180-183; Orth. Ev., p. 104; Shepard, Thes. Sabb., I.90, cf. 102; Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., p. 58.

and the redemptive work of Christ are to be understood.

The promise of redemption was made to Adam immediately after the fall, and renewed in Abraham, but was not fulfilled until the satisfactory work of Christ was completed. During the interim, the covenant of grace was dispensed obscurely and imperfectly in a legal manner through the Mosaic laws and ceremonies. The law promulgated by Moses at Sinai looks both ways, and belongs to both covenants. The decalogue, in substance, is the same law that was given to Adam in integrity as the rule of universal and absolute obedience. It is a compendium of the covenant of works. The image of holiness and righteousness which is required in the tables of stone, is the same that was required of Adam as the condition of the first covenant.[24] Yet the decalogue was given to the people of Israel, which included those who, by faith in the promise, were spiritual children of Abraham and under the covenant of grace. Accordingly, the moral law republished through Moses may be understood in three senses:

> either as a law of works obliging man unto a pure legal obedience, and accordingly to expect life or death: or as a rule of universal and absolute obedience, obliging man not only to what was commanded at present, but also unto whatsoever should afterwards be required. Or as the covenant of grace itself, though dispensed after a legal manner, comprehending the law as a perpetual rule of righteousness, freed from its pure legal nature of coaction, malediction and justification by works.[25]

The first sense includes all men who have not heard or re-

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[24] Shepard, Parable, p. 125f; Thes. Sabb., I.40, 33; Norton, Suff. of Christ, pp. 177f, 180f, 188f.

[25] Ibid., pp. 182f.

sponded to the call of the gospel. The second sense applies to those who have heard the call, and therefore stand obliged to believe in Christ. (Orthodox Puritans insisted that the gospel includes a *command* to believe,--in which respect the "law of faith" is continuous with the law *qua* law.[26]) The third sense of the law (including faith) is realized in the lives of the regenerate. The covenant of works having been broken by Adam, salvation by it is now impossible, though fallen men are characteristically unaware of this, or in any case disinclined to believe it. One reason for republishing the law through Moses is to restrain wickedness and to preserve some semblance of moral order in the world *post lapsum*. Another, and from the standpoint of the order of redemption more important, reason for its republication is to apprise men of their sinfulness, to convince them that justification is impossible by works, and so to prepare them to receive Christ. In this respect the moral law, in O.T. and N.T., is subservient to the covenant of grace.[27]

After the coming of Christ and the full revelation of the covenant of grace, the moral law remains in force as a universal rule of manners (for regenerate and unregenerate), and its pedagogical function *ad Christum* continues. In addition, the law acquires a "third use" as the rule by which the regenerate are to walk in obedience to God. The saints are indeed freed

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[26] E.g., Bulkeley, *Gosp. Cov.*, p. 101; Shepard, *Parable*, p. 136; cf. Pemble, *Vindiciae Gratiae*, *Works*, pp. 132f.

[27] Norton, *Suff. of Christ*, pp. 179, 183f; Bulkeley, *Gosp. Cov.*, pp. 57f; Shepard, *Thes. Sabb.*, I. 108.

from the law as a covenant, i.e., as a means of their justification. It has pleased God to confer life in another covenant, so that they are no longer under the covenant of works; and though they transgress the law, the regenerate are not for that reason cast out of the covenant of grace.[28] The saints, however, are nonetheless bound to the law as rule, for at least two reasons. In the first place, sin is, by definition, deliberate transgression of the moral law as universal rule for mankind.[29] This being the case, "then of necessity a believer is bound to attend the law as his rule, that so he may not sin or transgress that rule."[30] In the second place, the law comprises that holiness which belongs to the image of God as it is renewed in the regenerate. As rational creatures, believers are capable of acting in accordance with a rule, and, being sanctified and freed from the dominion of corrupt nature, they "have some inherent power so to act,...according to the rule of life."[31] It is the error of Antinomians to think that gospel and law differ in "that the law requires doing, but the gospel no doing, and that all believers, being under the gospel, are therefore under no law of doing." Familists err in presuming "to cast off all attendance to the directive power of the law, and so leave all to the Spirit's

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[28] E.g., Shepard, Believer, p. 118; Parable, p. 82; Thes. Sabb., I. 105f, 108.

[29] Ibid., th. 81, 83, 98; cf. Norton, Orth. Ev., p. 104.

[30] Shepard, Thes. Sabb., th. 83.

[31] Ibid., th. 90.

omnipotent and immediate acts."[32] Orthodox Puritans, in contrast, insisted that obedience under the gospel necessarily includes obedience to the law as a perfect rule of righteousness,--the same rule which applies under the covenant of works. Christ came to fulfill, and to establish the law, not to abolish it. Law and gospel require the same perfection of holiness of doing, inasmuch as both command that we be perfect and holy as God is perfect and holy.[33]

The law as the perfect rule of righteousness,--as voluntas dei mandati,--appears as a constant factor throughout the order of redemption (and throughout the biblical narrative in which that order is disclosed). Adam's transgression in eating the fruit was a breach of the same law of works given him at creation and afterwards reissued through Moses. In the fall, the covenant of works was broken but not abrogated, the law was violated but not annulled. Both remain in force to the end of the world, and the law continues beyond the end. All men outside of the covenant of grace, reprobate and elect (until their conversion) are under the covenant of works and obligated to perfect obedience to the law. Satisfaction of the covenant of works remains the condition of man's salvation. The imputation of Christ's legal obedience (God being pleased to accept it) is sufficient for the justification of sinners, for Christ performed perfect obedience, in behalf of

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[32] Ibid., th. 93, 99.

[33] Ibid., th. 93; Norton, Orth. Ev., p. 211, cf. 104; cf. Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., p. 101.

the elect, according to the law of works which was given to Adam. Had Adam personally performed such obedience, he would himself have been just.[34] The covenant of grace is founded upon Christ's legal obedience, yet the moral law is not therein abolished. The same law which was written in Adam's heart, delivered by Moses, and preached by Christ, is incarnated in the sanctified life of believers, who incur in the covenant of grace an obligation of thankful obedience to God's will as rule. To this extent, Shepard declared, the Kingdom of God is present in the visible church, for the laws of that Kingdom, the very "laws of heaven...are not only here promulgated, (as they be among the enemies of this kingdom), but accepted and received also." The same law, in fact, remains in force even in the state of glory. Shepard continued:

> [T]he same laws by which we shall be ruled in heaven we have here, and we are now under.... [T]hough in heaven the external letter and scription both of law and gospel shall be abolished, because they need them not when the day star is risen,...yet the living rules of both, for substance, shall remain.[35]

(c) Nature and necessity of Christ's obedience

One of the perennial questions confronting Christian apologists concerns the necessity of Christ's sufferings. If God is indeed omnipotent, could he not redeem mankind without requiring an agonizing death? At the more abstract theological level, the question takes the form of why the work of redemption occurred in the way it did. One possible answer is

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[34] Norton, Suff. of Christ, p. 190.

[35] Parable, pp. 17f.

suggested by the distinction between the absolute and ordinate power of God. Norton, with characteristic succinctness, gave the Puritan response:

> Though God by his absolute power might have saved man without redemption wrought by Christ: yet having constituted that rule of relative justice, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," Gen. 2.17. He could not [avoid] in respect of his power now limited to proceed by this rule, so that man having sinned, man must die, and satisfy the law that man may live. Justice requireth the Surety should die, that the Debtor may live: That [God] might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Rom. 3.26.[36]

God, in other words, is constrained by the immutability of his own nature, and by his inherent justice, to proceed in redemption as he has in fact proceeded. Potentia dei ordinata, God must exact a human death as punishment for Adam's transgression. In the covenant of works, God established obedience to the moral law as the standard of "relative justice" (i.e., which obtains between God and creatures) by which he is bound to recompense men. Whether the death in question is that of the transgressor himself, or of another man acting in his stead (as "surety"), is immaterial. The law requires that man must die. Having freely decided to proceed with men according to the moral law, God also "freely obliged himself to the observation thereof; and can now no more fail to execute justice according to this rule, than he can be unjust."[37] It follows, from the nature of God, that the law must be satisfied, in respect both of punishment and of obedience, if men are to

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[36] Orth. Ev., pp. 14f; cf. Suff. of Christ, p. 4.

[37] Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 14f, 42f (ital. added); cf. Hooker, Application of Redemption, pp. 305f.

attain eternal bliss.

Yet after the fall, not only are mankind unable to obey the law, but justice requires that mankind, including the elect, must die. If the elect die in their own persons, however, election is frustrated, and with it God's intention to manifest "the glory of his mercy in a way tempered with justice." If they do not die, the threat of punishment is false, God is unjust, and the law is void. There is, however, nothing in the terms of the covenant of works which prohibits God from accepting satisfaction from someone other than the proper debtors, provided the payment be sufficient to cover the debt owed. Herein lies the solution to the conundrum. It is the office of Christ as mediator between man and God to suffer the punishment due to man for breach of the law, and to render the perfect obedience required by the law for eternal reward. This work of Christ is also, of course, to be understood with reference to God's ordinate power, as encompassed in the eternal decree. God established the rule of relative justice by "the act of his free good pleasure," and by the same act he ordained this means of satisfying that rule. "As God's will is the rule of righteousness, so God's will is the rule of the temperature of righteousness."[38]

It is not necessary here to enter upon the fullness of Reformed christology, other than to observe that Christ, because he is both God and man, and is without sin, is capable of satisfying the law in all respects. For Puritans, Christ's

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[38] Norton, Suff. of Christ, pp. 2, 4f, 6f, 10f.

mediatorship was explicitly understood in terms of satisfying the law as required under the covenant of works. The mystery and "metaphysics" of the Incarnation were of interest chiefly as they established the fitness of the God-Man for this office.

As a result of the fall, mankind stand in a double misery. They are under sentence of condemnation for breach of the law, and they suffer from want of the righteousness required by the law. Restoration to felicity requires death in punishment for sin, and perfect legal obedience to the commandments. Legal obedience is that which is performed in one's own person, from a principle of grace received (at creation) in the first covenant, and in a way of merit. Fallen men, however, are utterly incapable in themselves of rendering such obedience. They can offer neither an acceptable atonement for sin, nor perfect obedience to the precepts, and must rely for both entirely upon Christ. Christ's obedience, accordingly, is necessarily double, viz. active, in fulfillment of the command, and passive, in the suffering of punishment. (Insistence on the necessity of this double obedience for salvation was more-or-less characteristic of Reformed Orthodoxy.)

> Mediatorly obedience, according to the received doctrine of the orthodox, is the inherent conformity and whole course of the active and passive obedience of Christ from his conception to his passion inclusively, performed by him as God-man Mediator, unto the law, in way of covenant, whereunto the whole good of redemption was due unto the elect for Christ's sake, according to order of justice, though conferred upon them in a way of mere grace.[39]

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[39] Ibid., pp. 140f.

The sufficiency of Christ's obedience in behalf of the elect derives from the dignity of his person, the quality or kind of his obedience, and the acceptability of it to God. Christ's dignity consists (in this respect) in his inherent righteousness as God-Man, there being more habitual grace in him than there is duty required in the law. His obedience was legal, being the same in nature and measure as that to which mankind stood bound by the covenant of works. His obedience was more acceptable to God than Adam's disobedience was detestable, and more acceptable than Adam's obedience had been, had he continued in the covenant of works.[40] Christ alone is by nature able to repair the damage done by Adam's disobedience; and it is only in virtue of the sufficiency of His mediatorship that the covenant of grace, as the means of restoring the elect, is possible at all.

If men are to be saved (justification by personal obedience to the law of works being out of the question), they must be justified by the obedience of another. Accordingly, the "meritorious cause" of that justification offered in the covenant of grace is Christ's legal obedience,--consisting of his "whole course of active and passive obedience..., together with his habitual conformity unto the law," performed by him as God-Man, mediator, and surety, in satisfaction of the covenant of works.[41] The substance of justification is the same

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[40] Ibid., pp. 6f, 196f, 221f, 238ff.

[41] Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 301ff; Suff. of Christ, pp. 238ff, 244f.

under both covenants, viz. legal obedience, and justification in both cases is the reward of merit. But whereas under the covenant of works justification of the debtor is by personal righteousness, under the covenant of grace it is by righteousness vicariously enjoyed. Christ personally fulfilled, and therein upheld, the law of works; and believers, by faith, in and through him obey the law legally in respect both of precept and curse. Justification is by merit, as it can only be, but not by our merit. In this respect merit is entirely compatible with the covenant of grace, which "denieth merit in the debtor proper, but not in the surety.... Our salvation cost Christ the full price, though it cost us nothing at all."[42]

Christ's meritorious obedience to the moral law, according to the covenant of works, is the foundation of the covenant of grace, by means of which the benefits of his redemptive work are communicated to the elect. The covenant of works, Bulkeley declared, is in substance

> unchangeable and everlasting,... God's unchangeable justice, will not suffer any unjust person to live; in so much that either we must have Christ to fulfill the justice of that covenant for us, or else for the breach of it we must perish for ever: None but righteous ones saith justice, shall have life, the reward of righteousness: This justice in God is unalterable, and changeth not, and thus far there is little or no difference between the one covenant and the other, but both are alike.[43]

The Son, Norton observed, was sent to fulfill the law of works

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[42] Ibid., pp. 186f, 190f, 198f, 243f; Orth. Ev., p. 211.

[43] Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., p. 369, cf. 51, 97.

"as a proper condition of his mediator's office."[44] The covenant of grace is, in effect, correlativum mediatoris, whose office consists in restoring the covenant-bond between God and man which was first entered at creation.

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The covenant of works is the foundation and form of the relationship between God and mankind, by which the latter are guided to their ordained ends in service of God's overarching intention to glorify himself in the manifesting of his "mercy tempered with justice." The balance of the order of redemption, encompassing man's fall and the restoration of the elect to felicity, unfolds in accordance with the conditions obtaining in the first covenant at creation. Moreover, the transaction in which the elect are actually restored, the covenant of grace, follows the pattern of God's salvific dealing established in the covenant of works. However much it may differ from the first covenant, the covenant of grace remains a mutual agreement between God and reasonable creatures, and to that extent it is necessarily conditional, though it is also entirely gratuitous. The conditionality of the second covenant is the subject of the next chapter.

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[44] Suff. of Christ, p. 192.

Chapter 10: The Conditionality of the Covenant of Grace

"All deliverances and salvation," wrote Peter Bulkeley, "which the Lord communicates to his people, he doth it by virtue of, and according to his covenant."[1] The principal *modus* by which God, as governor and redeemer, is ordinarily related to mankind, is a covenant. This *modus*, moreover, though rooted in the eternal decree, also reflects the nature of the creature covenanting. These two extremes, corresponding to the poles of the dialectic of nature and grace, were brought together in Puritan covenant theology,--not only in the covenant of works, but also in the covenant of grace.

The order of redemption begins with God's decision, before time, to glorify himself in manifesting his justice and mercy upon certain men. It ends beyond time, in the eternal felicity of the elect in glory, and the eternal infelicity of the non-elect in reprobation. Between the extremes of God's secret purpose and its ultimate accomplishment,--between two eternities, as it were,--God's covenant with men stands as the medium, in two senses. The covenant is the "means" in the sense of being the temporal midpoint in which God's prior secret intent is concretely manifested among men, and in which the future fulfillment of that intent begins to be enjoyed.[2] The covenant is also the "means" between the divine intent and its fulfillment, inasmuch as it is the concrete, historic

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[1] *Gosp. Cov.*, pp. 25f.

[2] Shepard, "To the Reader," in Bulkeley, *Gosp. Cov.*, p. A7vo; cf. Norton, *Orth. Ev.*, p. 86.

instrument by which God executes his decree respecting men's destinies. In the covenant of works, God manifests his justice in inflicting punishment according to the terms accepted by Adam. In the covenant of grace, God condemns sin, but freely and according to his good pleasure, spares certain sinners, thereby manifesting his mercy.[3] In both cases, God deals with men for eternal rewards by means of a deliberate transaction in which each party acquires specific obligations to which he may be held, and in which the distinctive capacities of mankind are exercised.

In the covenant-transaction, men are invited to consent to an offer of terms on God's part. Respecting salvation post lapsum,

> God conveys his blessings only by covenant, and this covenant must every soul enter into, every particular soul must enter into a particular covenant with God; out of this way there is no life, thereupon is the exhortation of Hezekiah to his people, 2 Chron. 30.7, 8, "Be not you stiff-necked as your fathers, but yield your selves unto the Lord," (in the original, "give the hand unto the Lord") that is, they should come and enter into covenant with God,...every one of us for his own part.[4]

The covenant of grace is properly, and necessarily conditional. This is so because a covenant-transaction by nature is conditional, and also because the transaction is accommodated to the capacities of the parties involved. The absolute decree respecting men is dispensed under a conditional form; and the form is conditional because God elects, in accomplishing his ends, to respect the integrity of second causes, including

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[3] Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., p. 76.

[4] Ibid., pp. 43f.

the human will. In the order of regeneration, therefore, as in the natural order, there is a "sweet concurrence" of divine and creaturely efficiency, wherein God attains his intended ends mediately, i.e., through the proper operations of created things. These convictions concerning God's respect for the created order were fundamental to that insfstence on the necessity of human activity in the pursuit and the exercise of saving grace, which was the focus of Puritan divinity, and the substance of Puritan preaching.

(a) Conditional dispensation of free grace

By definition a covenant is an agreement among parties involving conditions binding on all sides. A covenant, Bulkeley noted (quoting Rollock's De vocatione efficaci), is "promissio sub certa conditione." The "proper nature" of a covenant requires "a mutual obligation and binding of the parties one to another by condition." This is as true of the covenant of grace as of the covenant of works. God not only binds himself to men in the covenant of grace, but he binds them to himself, in dependence and obedience. He not only promises to establish his covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17.7), but he commands Abraham, "Thou also shall keep my covenant" (v. 9).[5] Scripture, in any case, expressly mentions the condition upon which the promise of life is made, "as in Acts 16.31, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved,' Rom. 10.9, 'If thou believest, thou shalt be saved, etc.'"

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[5] Ibid., pp. 27, 281ff.

The promises of life and peace are "not made but upon condition of faith and obedience, not to unbelieving and profane."[6]

Whatever may be said about the gratuity of the covenant with Abraham, in contrast to that with Adam in integrity, insofar as it is a covenant, it is necessarily conditional. There is a "way of the covenant," Bulkeley observed, in which the Lord ordinarily conveys blessedness, and all who would obtain it must walk in that way. Salvation is offered to sinners freely, but not absolutely, in the sense that God will save them while they continue unbelieving and impenitent, and walk at liberty after their own hearts and not under God's government. God rather "commands and works us to repent and believe, and then promises that in the way of faith and repentance, he will save us."[7] The covenant of grace on God's part is indeed absolute, but not on man's part. There is a prior condition which is the sine qua non of salvation. Though the act fulfilling the condition is itself the fruit of grace, and is in no way meritorious of salvation, the order of regeneration may properly be said to be conditional. In this respect the covenant of grace is like the first covenant with Adam. In neither are men left at liberty; neither promises life without some correlative obligation on man's part. The conditions of the respective covenants differ, but they are, nonetheless, genuine conditions.[8]

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[6] Ibid., pp. 283, 285, 50.

[7] Ibid., pp. 279f.

[8] Ibid., p. 287.

The essential gratuity of both covenants derives from their foundation, in all respects, in the free will and absolute good pleasure of God. That God condescends to treat with mankind at their own level and in their own way, viz. in covenants, is solely the result of God's own free decision. Between the condition and the reward in each covenant, moreover, there is no inherent proportionality. Obedience merits eternal bliss, and faith issues in justification, because God has arbitrarily established a connection between them. And the respective acts of obedience and of faith spring from habits which are themselves gifts of grace. Adam's ability to obey the law was a gracious endowment, "superadded" to his natural endowment, and the same may be said of the habit of faith by which the elect are enabled to fulfill the condition of the covenant of grace.[9] The existence, and the execution, of both covenants is willed absolutely by God, and in this respect both are properly said to be "of grace." At the same time, however, the execution of both covenants, in respect of form, is conditional.[10] In the covenant of grace, therefore, the indefinite proposition in the gospel, "'Whosoever believes, shall be saved,'" is (Norton observed) "equipolent unto that conditional, 'If you believe, you shall be saved.'" Faith and salvation are so connected in the decree that one infallibly follows from the other, whence follows the general proposition, the conditional, and also the imperative, "'Believe and

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[9] V. ibid., pp. 286, 73f.

[10] Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 85-89.

you shall be saved.'"

The covenants of works and of grace differ, in respect of their conditions, in that God himself undertakes for the fulfilling of man's condition in the covenant of grace. In integrity, Adam had power sufficient to obey the law, but no assurance from God that he would obey it. In respect of performing the condition, he was left entirely to himself. In the covenant of grace, however, God "doth not only promise the good, but to begin, and perfect, and fulfill the condition absolutely."[11] Men are assured that God himself will enable them to perform the required condition, in addition to conveying the blessedness promised to the condition. Herein lies the unique security of the covenant of grace.[12] The giving of first grace in vocation precedes "our personal covenant betwixt God and us, by which we bind our selves unto him to take him for our God, to depend upon him, and to submit our selves unto his will." God infuses habits of grace, beginning to renew a man, and then "propounds" to him, in and through preaching, the blessings of the covenant, and commands him to depend on God by faith for performance of them, and thus the man is enabled to walk in the "way" of the covenant.[13] The answer of

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[11] Shepard, Cases, in Works (1967), I, 309; Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 85, 88.

[12] Shepard, Believer, p. 195; Parable, pp. 424f; Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 73f, 369f; cf. Sibbes, Christ's Exaltation Purchased by Humiliation, in Works (1863), V, 342; Excellency of the Law, Works, IV, 219; Preston, Life Eternal, II.86f; Breast-plate, I.25f.

[13] Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 286f.

faith, which springs from the first gracious habits, is the man's answer. Yet, wrote Sibbes, "the power by which we answer is no less than that whereby God created the world and raised Christ from the dead. The answer is ours, but the power and strength is God's whereby we answer."[14]

The gratuity of the covenant of grace is insured by the fact that the willing of it, together with the application of it, is, on God's part, absolute. In this respect, the covenant, and its efficacy, are of, and by, grace alone. "Faith is the condition of salvation,...yet both faith, and salvation by faith, are willed absolutely."[15] At the same time, the integrity of the human creature is upheld in that God "so administers his absolute decree, as that there is as much place left for an efficacious conditional dispensation, as if the decree itself were conditional."[16] God chooses this manner of administering the decree, Norton observed, for reasons which, in effect, reflect his willingness to respect the created nature and capacities of men, and to employ created means, in regeneration. Grace is administered in a covenant, in order, namely: 1) that the elect and reprobate, being ignorant of their estate until actual regeneration, may look upon themselves as equally under wrath, and be encouraged thereby to attend upon the preparatory means and to hope in effectual

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[14] Preface to John Smith, An Exposition of the Creed (London, 1632), in Grosart, "Memoir," Works, I, civ.

[15] Norton, Orth. Ev., p. 93.

[16] Ibid., p. 89.

vocation; 2) that all men, whether elect or not, may be admonished of their duty to believe; 3) that men may know what to do that they may be saved; and 4) that God may proceed as is most suitable to reasonable creatures, i.e., by persuasion and the proposal of arguments.[17] The covenant of grace is conditional, in other words, because man by nature is a "cause by counsel." This observation is supported by the systematic loci which treat of the liberty of second causes, including the human will.

(b) Natural liberty of the human will

The specific question at issue in Reformed discussions of the freedom of the human will, was (in Perkins' words)

> Whether a natural man or an infidel, can by the freedom of his will, without faith, and without the help of God, do any work morally good, that is, a work in which there is no sin.[18]

("Natural man" is here understood of man after the fall. A "morally good" work is an act of obedience to the moral law, performed out of love and honor towards God.) The orthodox answer to this question is, No. The will of fallen man, being corrupt, can only will corruption. The will is helplessly bound by sin. This bondage, however, concerns the quality, in particular the ends, of human willing, rather than the power of willing itself. "[W]e grant," Perkins noted, "that liberty of will is not abolished, but wounded: Because though liberty

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[17] Ibid., p. 86; cf. Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 26ff, cf. 42f.

[18] William Perkins, A Treatise of God's Free Grace and Man's Free Will, Works (1626), I, 731.

of grace to will well be lost, yet liberty of nature to will, still remains."[19] The notorious doctrine of the "bondage of the will" concerns man's power sincerely to obey God's commands, not the power of the will to perform its natural office of willing. It is with this "natural liberty" of the will, and God's respect of it in regeneration, that we are here concerned.

Perkins' definition of the human will may be taken as representative. The will is a "power," i.e., "an ability or created faculty," "of willing, nilling, choosing, refusing, [and] suspending, which depends on reason."[20] The will is that faculty of the human mind which elects or rejects a given course of action presented to it by the understanding. By definition the will is free from constraint and external compulsion. It is not, however, free from all necessity, inasmuch as it unavoidably acts in accordance with the antecedent determination of the divine decree. Nonetheless, the certainty of God's decree does not abolish the proper operation of man's will, "but rather order[s] it, and mildly incline[s], or draw[s] it forth."

> [I]n the doing of a voluntary action, it is sufficient that it proceed of judgment, and have his beginning from within the will, though otherwise, in respect of God's will, it be of unchangeable necessity.... [T]he thing that is directly contrary to freedom of will, is compulsion: because it abolishes consent.[21]

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[19] Ibid., cf. pp. 722f.

[20] Ibid., p. 722.

[21] Ibid., p. 723; cf. Norton, Orth. Ev., p. 74; Ames, Conscience, III.xix.1-4.

The liberty of the will, considered as a faculty of the human mind, consists in its ability, of itself, and without external compulsion, to consent to the determination of the understanding respecting a particular object, all the while retaining the power to nil what is willed, and to will the contrary of what is willed.[22]

In the state of integrity, before the fall, man's will was capable of choosing either good or evil. This capacity sprang from two principles in Adam's soul, one gracious, the other natural. Adam's ability to will the good was founded in the holiness of his will, i.e., in the gifts of grace superadded to his natural endowment. Thus equipped, Adam could either keep, or break, the divine commandments, as he willed. At the same time, as part of his natural endowment, Adam possessed a liberty of will that is inherent in the faculty itself, viz. the power of willing, nilling, or suspending. In the state of corruption, men's "liberty of grace" is altogether lost, but his "liberty of nature" continues. Fallen man can and does will in all his actions, as is evident from "common experience." Natural liberty of the will extends to all of man's physical, economic, political, and social activity.[23] It also extends to the practice of religion.

> [C]orrupt and sinful man, hath power and liberty to think of God, and to think many things of him, good in themselves: power to read and search the Scriptures: power to speak and talk of the word of God: power to come to the congregation and hear a sermon,...: power to conceive a

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[22] Perkins, God's Free Grace, pp. 723, 727.

[23] Ibid., pp. 722f.

> zeal (I say not a good zeal, but only a zeal I say) for the maintenance of outward duties of religion.[24]

Though the fall of Adam extinguished utterly man's power to will well, his natural liberty to will remains; and God, in regenerating fallen men, proceeds in accordance with this natural liberty, as something integral to a created faculty proper to man.

In the accomplishment of regeneration, as in the execution of all determinations of his will, God respects, and ordinarily employs, the agency and liberty of second causes, including man's will. This was, in effect, the premise of Reformed orthodox discussion respecting the relationship of God's power and that of creatures.

> The efficiency of God offers no violence, nor changes, the nature of things, but governs them according to their own natures.[25]

In respect of the human will, God determines it, inasmuch as it is a second cause, agreeably to its nature as a free agent. He determines it, that is, so that it determines itself. To say that God compels the will, either in its natural elections or in regeneration, is a contradiction, for it is to say "that which is willing is unwilling."[26] Rather than constraining, or overruling the will, God orders its acting to his own ends in accordance with the will's proper nature. He moves the

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[24] Ibid., p. 729; cf. Hooker, Applic. of Redempt., pp. 142f.

[25] Norton, Orth. Ev., p. 114, cf. 137; cf. Sibbes, The Soul's Conflict, Works (1862), I, 205f.

[26] Norton, Orth. Ev., p. 114.

will so that the will moves itself. God guides creatures, Sibbes noted, "sweetly according to the instincts he hath put into them." God supplies creatures with a power and manner of working, which is suited to their respective natures. In accomplishing his will for creatures God

> maintains both the power and manner of working, and perfects and accomplishes the same by acting of it.... He applies and stirs up our abilities and actions to this or that particular.... He suspends or removes the hindrances of all actions, and so powerfully, wisely, and sweetly orders them to his own ends.[27]

In executing his decree regarding creatures, God proceeds mediately, via the instrumentality of second causes. Second causes (causes other than God, the First Cause) cannot produce an effect without the first cause, for they depend upon the first cause for their being, and are subject to the divine decree which determines the ends of all action whatsoever. But the first cause will not produce a given effect without the appropriate second causes. God exercises his efficiency by "an external transient influence" upon the creature in time, exactly corresponding to the decree before time, "moving upon, co-working with, and assisting of the second cause in its operations."[28]

> [T]hough (as the beings, so) the operations of the second causes, are from the first cause efficiently, yet they are from their next causes formally. God causes the burning of the fire, yet we do not say God burns, but the fire burns. God works repentance in the soul, yet it is not a truth to say God repents, but man repents; God is the next efficient cause, but not the next formal cause.[29]

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[27] Sibbes, Soul's Conflict, pp. 205f.

[28] Norton, Orth. Ev., pp. 75f, 105, 108ff, 114.

[29] Ibid., p. 110, cf. 113f; cf. Leigh, Body of Divinity, p. 493.

The power which produces a particular effect derives ultimately from God; and the existence of the effect depends upon God's willing of it. However, the form of the effect, i.e., what it is, is determined by the created agency that produces it.

What is true of fire's burning is also true of a man's believing. As fire burns in virtue of an inward power of burning, so a man believes from an inward power of faith (i.e., an infused habit). The cases differ in that fire's inward principle is natural to it, whereas a man's power to believe is infused by grace. The cases are alike in that the respective ends for which a given fire burns, and for which a given man believes, are determined by the divine decree, and are achieved through created means acting according to their proper natures. Thus, in regeneration, God implants gracious principles in the soul, which enable its natural faculties of perception, reflection, and volition to work together in their normal fashion toward the divinely-intended end. That end is union with Christ as supreme good, and voluntary closing with him in an act of faith; or, in other words, the laying-hold of the covenant of grace. In and through the hearing (in preaching) of the offer of grace and the promise of the covenant, God scatters seeds of grace in the soul. So empowered, the soul gradually comes to sense the value of grace for what it truly is, and to sense the misery of the absence of grace. Inasmuch as "desire naturally springs from the apprehension of any good made known," there arises from this esteem and misery

a longing for grace.[30]

> Faith is both in the understanding and in the will; as it is in the understanding, it opens the eye to see, and clearly to discern the blessing of the covenant, and then stirs up the will to pursue and desire the attaining of grace revealed.[31]

In due course, sometimes sooner, sometimes later, sometimes more forcefully, sometimes but haltingly, the soul goes forth in faith to embrace the promise and to receive Christ, giving him "the hand of faith" in covenant.[32]

In regeneration, God works through created means, as second causes, without doing violence to the natural constitution of the creatures involved. Regeneration, Perkins observed, "is not in respect of the substance of body or soul, or in respect of the faculties of the soul, but only in respect of the goodness thereof, which is a conformity to the will of God."[33] This conformity is a matter of the quality and direction of a man's willing, in particular of his ability sincerely to will as God wills, not of his ability to will, as such. God renews the corrupt will by "healing" it, by restoring its former ability to will well. To say that a man is converted against his will, or in spite of his will, is true in respect of man's will as fallen and corrupt, but not in respect of man's will

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[30] E.g., Sibbes, Excellency of the Gospel, Works (1863), IV, 258; Bulkeley, Gosp. Cov., pp. 299-303.

[31] Ibid., p. 303.

[32] Ibid., pp. 309f; cf. Usher, Body of Divinity, pp. 196, 199; Leigh, Body of Divinity, pp. 501f; Preston, Breast-plate, I, 55-59.

[33] Perkins, God's Free Grace, p. 730.

as volitional faculty.

The affirmation of the natural liberty of man, and the liberty and co-agency with God of second causes, is the metaphysical foundation of Puritan exhortations to attend upon the means of grace.

> In, that the new birth and regeneration of a sinner, is not without the motion of his own will, we are taught, that we must, if we desire our own salvation, use the good means, and strive against our own corruptions, and endeavor earnestly, by asking, seeking, knocking. It will be said, that faith repentance, and the rest are all gifts of God. I answer: there is no virtue or gift of God in us, with out our wills: and in every good act, God's grace, and man's will, concur: God's grace as the principal cause; man's will renewed, as the instrument of God. And therefore in all good things, industry, and labor, and invocation on our parts is required.[34]

The doctrine of the "pedagogical use" ad Christum of the law, or of "ministerial preparations" for conversion, as articulated by English and New-English Puritans, is to be understood in light of this passage from Perkins. The same is true of the constant appeals, from Puritan pulpits on both sides of the Atlantic, to be diligent in seeking and in exercising the gracious gifts of the Spirit. God's efficiency, in respect of spiritual, as well as natural ends, proceeds in and through the normal activity of created instruments.

(c) Necessity of consent

"The condition of grace and God's offer," wrote Hooker, "is this, That a man must will to receive Christ and grace, before he can receive Christ and grace." Though the offer of grace is freely made, yet "God will not save a man against his

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[34] Ibid., p. 738.

will." A man must first will to have life, before he can have it. The will "is the great wheel that turns all, and the power of the soul, that works all in this case."[35] Sibbes sounded the same theme. "Divinity," he noted, "rules the will especially." The change wrought in regeneration affects the will most of all, and it is the will that determines the character of a man.

> For the bent of the will makes a good or a bad man; and the desires of the will carry the whole man with it. We are as the bent is of our will. We are as the choice of our will is.... Though all grace come in through the understanding enlightened,...yet it goeth into the will.[36]

In the same vein, Ames characterized faith as "an act of choice, an act of the whole man," in which the will, moved by the understanding, reaches out and embraces the good offered. "Only through a consent of the will" can a man "surrender himself to God in Christ as a sufficient and faithful Savior."[37] Justifying faith, Preston reiterated, is not only an act of the mind assenting to the truth of the offer of grace. It is also, and necessarily, an act of the will, consenting to the offer, laying hold of the promises and applying them to a man's self.[38] Orthodox Puritans, in concert with Reformed Orthodoxy generally, insisted that the crucial aspect of faith, as the soul's movement unto union with Christ, is an

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[35] Unbeliever's Preparing, pp. 2f, 26-29 (ital. added).

[36] Excellency of the Gospel, Works (1863), IV, 258f.

[37] Marrow (Eusden), I.iii.2, 3, 19; cf. Leigh, Body of Divinity, p. 502.

[38] Breast-plate, I, 55-59, cf. 18ff, 21ff.

act of the will, carrying with it the whole man, soul and body.

Entry into the covenant of grace requires an act of consent on man's part because such an act belongs to the nature of a covenant. That God covenants with man for salvation, however, reflects man's created nature as a cause by counsel. Man's uniqueness among the creatures springs from his nature as a purposive being. Stones, plants, and beasts work blindly, or by reflex. Man moves by propounding to himself ends, and by framing means to achieve them. The will is the faculty which moves the soul, and with it the man, actually to pursue a given goal. Apart from the agency of the will, the understanding is powerless to move the man toward, or away from, any object. This holds for spiritual as well as for natural goods. Though the understanding may discern the excellency of God, yet it is proper only to the will "to relish and receive the goodness or the mercy of the Lord.... [T]he will is the queen of the soul, that takes all that good which the understanding sees and discerns, and which is offered and tendered to it."[39]

To deny that the will is active in closing with Christ, is to suggest that the covenant of grace is not truly a covenant, inasmuch as that denial deprives men of a proper consent. It is also to suggest that God, in regeneration, disregards the efficiency which is proper to the will as a second cause. Those who say that a man, in respect of saving and sanctifying grace, must "do nothing," but "Christ must do

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[39] Hooker, Unbeliever's Preparing, pp. 56f (ital. added).

all," in effect deny the proper activity of second causes altogether, as they are instruments in the order of regeneration. God must then save men in spite of, or apart from, created means and natural faculties. Such a conclusion about God's salvific activity, however, was contrary to a basic conviction of Puritan divinity.

Rejection of the efficiency of man's will as a second cause, logically extended, had sweeping consequences. To do so, Norton declared, was to call into question the conclusions of common human experience and to overthrow "the whole order of nature."[40] It was, in effect, to say that the sun does not truly shine, or fire truly burn. If second causes have no proper efficacy, then creatures, both animate and inanimate, have no active principles in themselves. Fire has neither inherent ability to burn, nor inherent tendency to ascend. If second causes are in fact incapable of producing effects, then it is impossible, by observation and reasoning, to conclude from effects to causes, or to infer effects from causes,--in which case it no longer makes sense to say that fire is hot from its burning, or burns things because it is hot. Denial of inherent active principles, moreover, removes all distinction between living creatures, inasmuch as it denies the existence of the respective souls (vegetative, sensitive, and rational) by which such creatures are distinguished. There is then no difference between living and lifeless creatures "in respect of their formal, and most noble difference, which is a

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[40] Orth. Ev., pp. 111ff.

principle of action, with the operations thereupon ensuing." Creatures differ only in outward shape; and action is in fact "only the first cause in the presence of such a creature."[41]

Denial of the efficiency of second causes has unpleasant consequences not only for the order of nature, but also for the order of regeneration. If man is in fact incapable of understanding, willing, remembering, or being affected (all of which are actions), then he is incapable of blessedness, which consists in the intellectual vision and spiritual enjoyment of God as chief good. Moreover, if there are no actions, the human creature is incapable of proceeding in the "way of heaven," viz. of obedience; for if there is no action at all, there can be no good or evil action, and hence no obedience. And if this is the case, then the obedience of Christ himself is called into question, and the Saviorhood founded upon it. By logical implication, denial of the efficiency of second causes means denial of salvation altogether. "Nay, if there were no actions of man, (the very reasonable soul by just consequence supposing action) it would infer, that there were no man, and consequently no Christ, Christ being both God and man." All of this, Norton allowed, is clean contrary to experience, and to scripture, which plainly ascribes efficiency to second causes (as 1 Cor. 3.9). "So doth God administer all things which he hath created, as that he also suffers them to exercise and act their proper motions."[42]

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[41] Ibid., pp. 111f.

[42] Ibid., pp. 112f.

Norton's portrayal of the consequences of denying efficiency to second causes was rhetorically inflated, but basically accurate. The extreme subordination of created nature to the operations of increated grace, as advanced by English and New-English Antinomians, had sweeping implications not only for theology and ethics, but also for physics and epistemology. Were these implications followed to their logical conclusions, an enormous wedge would be driven between God and his creation, with potentially tragic consequences for human social and intellectual life. Reformed divines were quite unwilling to allow such a rupture between Creator and creatures, and they looked with suspicion upon anyone whose passion for the gratuity of grace, or whose yearning for intimacy with the Spirit, tended in that direction. The normative position is accurately summarized in the sentence, just quoted, from the Orthodox Evangelist.

Historical Prospect

On the stage of 17th-century English history, the New-England Antinomian Affair was a very minor and altogether provincial flurry. It was important for the subsequent history of Massachusetts Bay, inasmuch as its outcome assured the ascendency there of the strain of Puritan thought and piety represented by Winthrop, Bulkeley, Shepard, et al., which may be regarded as more or less characteristic of Puritanism in the period down to the Westminster Assembly (matters of church-polity excepted). Whatever its historic magnitude, however, the New-England dispute involved a major theological issue,--an issue as old as Christianity, and one to which Puritans were especially susceptible. In a sense, the problem of the relationship of nature and grace is the cardinal problem of Christian theology, which must find some way of dealing conceptually with the juxtaposition of heavenly and earthly orders in the lives of individual Christians. How sweeping are the consequences for worldly existence, in family, market, state, church, and school, of the New Order brought about by the intervention in a man's life of divine grace? Is there an utterly unbridgeable gulf between the New Creation into which the regenerate are taken up, and the old creation in which, up to that point, they lived, moved, and had their being? Or does participation in the New Order only alter a man's relationship to the old, without completely dissolving his ties with it, and enable him to order worldly life in new ways? Upon the answer to these questions hangs a whole series of

answers to other questions concerning ecclesiology, ethics, the practice of piety, and the shape of Christian society.

In the course of Christian history, a variety of answers to the nature-and-grace question have appeared. The elders of the Bay Colony represented one, the Hutchinsonians another. The elders insisted that there is no inherent opposition between created nature and regenerating grace which would hinder God from employing created means, both natural and spiritual, in achieving holy ends. Anne Hutchinson and her adherents held the contrary. Created things, whether natural faculties or gracious habits, cannot be instrumental to the bond, in regeneration, established between God and men. Only the Holy Spirit, operating in his proper nature as Third Person of the Trinity, creates such a bond, and only the Spirit can witness to it. For the Hutchinsonians, regeneration was a "miracle" pure-and-simple, in which God overrules the order of nature, and elevates men above the earthly moral order. For the elders, rebirth was also a miracle, but a miracle achieved mediately, naturally, and in accordance with the moral order established at creation. For the elders, the covenant of grace was necessarily of the same form as the covenant of works, requiring consent and obedience on man's part. For the Hutchinsonians, in whose estimation man could not properly <u>covenant</u> with God at all, exhortations to diligence in the use of "means," and in works of sanctification, implied covert reliance on the covenant of works, at the expense of the purity, gratuity, and sovereignty of divine grace. The elders' society was, in practice, as broad as the heterogeneous population

of Massachusetts. The Hutchinsonians implied that they would prefer not to do business with "enemies of Christ."

On Tuesday, 30 January, 1649, Charles I of England stepped through the middle window of the Banqueting Hall at Whitehall, onto the scaffold from which, at four minutes past two, he passed into history. The execution of the King, reflecting the rise in power of the Army radicals, may be taken as symbolic of the rending of a consensus of faith and practice built up during the first forty years of the 17th century, when Puritans constituted the increasingly harried religious and political Opposition in England. There was in Puritanism a potentially dangerous individualism, born of a characteristic Puritan intimacy with the Holy Spirit, and of a lurking conviction of the utter equality of men before the divine sovereignty, which rendered the movement inherently unstable. Once the unity enforced by persecution and warfare was removed, a kind of fission occurred,--of which the most positive result was an increasing insistence, among a wide variety of nonconformists, on the principle of toleration. Its negative result was the ultimate collapse of the Puritan program for establishing a godly commonwealth in Britain.

With the rise of social and political radicalism during the Civil War, there occurred a related flowering of theological radicalism which infected Puritan clergy as well as self-appointed "prophets." Heresiography appeared as a new genre in Puritan literature, and Puritan polemicists, from the 1640's until the end of the century, tilted their swords less against Catholics and Arminians than against members of their

own party. In debate with sectaries during Commonwealth and Protectorate, and in exchanges between more respectable nonconformists beginning in the early 1650's and continuing into the 1690's, issues involving the relationship of nature and grace in regeneration occupied an important place. Among them was the question of the nature of the covenant of grace, and of the parties to it, viz., whether the covenant is actually made with men, or only with Christ, men partaking of it as they are united to Christ by the Spirit. At the hands of "orthodox" divines the covenant-motif underwent further elaboration. Between covenant of grace and covenant of works an inter-trinitarian covenant was inserted (frequently designated the "covenant of redemption"), in which Christ was held to have contracted with the Father for fulfillment of the covenant of works. The covenant of grace is founded upon the covenant of redemption, in which salvation was obtained for men. Salvation, however, is applied to men in the covenant of grace, which is necessarily made with individuals. The more radical element tended to absorb the covenant of grace into the inter-trinitarian covenant, lest the gratuity of redemption be compromised by a transaction involving human consent.[1] In nonconformist controversy concerning these issues, after the Restoration, New-England divines tended to maintain the

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[1] E.g., Savoy Declaration, Conf. of Faith, ch. viii; George Gillespie, The Ark of the Covenant Opened (London, 1677); Samuel Willard, Covenant-Keeping the Way to Blessedness (Boston, 1682), and The Doctrine of the Covenant of Redemption (Boston, 1693); Richard C. Greaves, "John Bunyan and Covenant Thought in the Seventeenth Century," Church History, XXIV (June, 1965), 151-169.

position articulated in the 1630's and '40's by Shepard, Bulkeley, and Norton, arguing that the freeness of justification may consist with a covenant made with individual men, without compromising the Protestant principles of sola gratia and sola fide.

In their faithfulness to the teachings of the founders, however, New-England Puritans represented something of an exception. After the Restoration, English nonconformity entered upon different paths from those that had led to Westminster; and intellectual and religious currents flowed in different channels, channels which were often remote from the shores of Massachusetts Bay. New England, founded as a beacon to guide the further reformation of the English Church,--which reformation Westminster had been called to carry out, and which eventuated (ironically) in the Act of Toleration,--became one of the more-distant provinces of the "first" English Empire. Toleration was, in a sense, the practical consequence of the tendency inherent in Puritanism to split into sub-groups, each earnestly contending for its own ecclesiological, doctrinal, and/or moral purity. Toleration also reflected a gradual relaxation of sectarian intensity after the striving and exhaustion of the Cromwellian period. In both the sectarian zeal of Puritans, and its subsequent cooling, moreover, formal Puritan divinity was implicated.

Like the Puritan movement itself, Puritan theology was inherently unstable. Considered as an intellectual construction, the theological scheme articulated by the Puritan divines encountered in this essay carried within itself the

seeds of its own dissolution. Puritan divinity was founded upon a carefully wrought, finely balanced dialectic which embraced, in tenuous harmony, divine activity and created nature, religious individualism and doctrinal orthodoxy, emotional piety and intellectual precision, Plum Island and the New Jerusalem. Aberration was possible in any of these directions. Once the delicate balance of the dialectic was lost, a Puritan could become a Yankee or a Unitarian as easily as he could become a Baptist or a Quaker. Historians are sometimes inclined to see in English Puritanism the beginnings of the broad, international pietistic impulse which is represented variously by Philip Jacob Spener, John Wesley, and Jonathan Edwards. Something similar may be said of the "natural" side of the orthodox Puritan dialectic of nature and grace, with regard to subsequent Anglo-American religious and intellectual history.

Whatever Puritans may have thought of God's sovereignty, their view of man, considered as a creature, was frankly flattering. For orthodox Puritans, affirmation of the integrity of second causes, the natural liberty of man's will, the ability of human reason to derive knowledge of God from his effects in creation, and the importance of rational "method" in theologizing, far from being tucked under the rug of pious feeling, were premises, both for the practice of piety and for the exposition of articles of faith. The order of regeneration, as represented in the Puritan theological scheme, presupposes an inherent capacity in human nature to receive and to exercise gracious powers, and also presupposes the

"eviternity" of the distinctively human faculties of reason and will. Though these faculties are created with man in time, they belong to man's immortal soul, and are, in fact, those faculties which fit man for eternal felicity, understood as intuitive intellectual apprehension of the divine essence, and complete conformity of will with the divine will. Puritanism shared these affirmations with Protestant Orthodoxy, and with the scholastic tradition generally. Fallen man, his will corrupted, is indeed a despicable creature; but man considered in himself is truly but little lower than the angels. For this reason, it may be suggested, the way from Perkins' Golden Chain to Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity, while not direct, is nonetheless continuous. And while there is an immediate connection between Shepard's Parable of the Ten Virgins and Edwards' Religious Affections, there is also a connection, though less direct, between Norton's Orthodox Evangelist and Cotton Mather's Christian Philosopher.

As the 17th century gave way to the 18th, the rationalistic and naturalistic components of Protestant Orthodoxy were increasingly appropriated by the devotees of Reason, as the characteristic, cardinal,--and sovereign,--human capacity. The orthodox theologian's concern for the liberty and integrity of second causes appears, much altered, in the Newtonian world-machine, in which second causes were, for all practical purposes, supreme. Much later, in Thomas Jefferson's versions of the life of Jesus, may be seen Orthodoxy's respect for the powers of human reason and human conscience,--now unqualified by doctrinal norms and made into the chief principle of bibli-

cal and theological criticism. In response to the changing climate of opinion, a substantial segment of Anglo-American nonconformity abandoned the rational and natural realms to philosophers. Defenders of traditional doctrines retreated into institutionalized piety, fortified by increasingly rigid biblicism and theological dogmatism. In due course, the weight of Christian truth-claims was loaded almost entirely upon the alleged miraculousness of the biblical miracles, and articles of faith were regarded as divinely authored in proportion as they were intellectually absurd. A certain resiliency, conferred by its dialectical balance, went out of Puritan theology. With it was lost a certain creative tension between nature and grace from which orthodox Puritanism derived great vitality. Also lost was the dialectic of pious worldliness which regarded a heavenly calling as incomplete without an earthly one. The more self-conscious heirs of Puritans,--those who strove to carry on the tradition,--found it increasingly difficult to hold together reason and faith in their religion, and also found it increasingly difficult to embrace the world with a good conscience. To that extent they ceased to be Puritans, and became merely puritanical.

Bibliographical Note

The literature on Anglo-American Puritanism is voluminous, and growing daily. The following is offered to assist the reader's own explorations along lines pursued in the foregoing essay.

With regard to New-England Puritanism, Perry Miller's The New England Mind, vol. I, The Seventeenth Century (New York, 1939), and vol. II, From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), may be taken as point of departure for recent scholarship, much of which has followed Miller's lead, or begun by criticizing him. Alan Simpson's Puritanism in old and New England (Chicago, 1955) is a brief introduction to the Puritan movement as a whole. Edmund S. Morgan, in a long list of books and articles, examines multiple facets of Puritan history, with pronounced sensitivity to the broader Puritan ethos. Elaborate primary and secondary bibliography is available in Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., The Puritans: A Sourcebook of their Writings (New York, 1963), I, xxix-lix; II, 777-818. More-recent scholarship is reviewed in Michael McGiffert, "American Puritan Studies in the 1960's," William and Mary Quarterly, XXVII (Jan., 1970), 38-67, and in David D. Hall's "Understanding the Puritans" in H. Bass, ed., The State of American History (Chicago, 1970). Extensive bibliography of the New-England Antinomian Controversy is included in Emery Battis, Saints and Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony (Chapel Hill, 1962).

The Antinomian Controversy itself is the object of a long, distinguished, and variegated historiographical tradition. Cotton Mather, in the Magnalia Christi Americana (London, 1702; reprinted, ed. T. Robbins, Hartford, 1853-), regarded the affair as an irruption of heresy and sectarianism. According to Mather, the cardinal issue was whether assurance of justification might be drawn from works of sanctification. Thomas Hutchinson, in The History of Massachusetts (Boston, 1764-), identified Anne Hutchinson's notions about direct revelation as the cause of the uproar, and regarded the Colony's response as an instance of the rigidly anti-tolerationist spirit of the times. John Gorham Palfrey, in his History of New England During the Stuart Dynasty (Boston, 1859-), assessed the incident in terms of the authorities' need to maintain public order at a time of military and diplomatic crisis. Charles Francis Adams, in Three Episodes of Massachusetts History (Boston, 1892), disavowed all interest in Puritan theology, treating the controversy as a contest between individual devotion to conscience and repressive dogmatic authority. Reappropriation of the theological dimension began with Perry Miller's work, in particular his "'Preparation for Salvation' in Seventeenth-Century New England," Journal of the History of Ideas, IV (June, 1943), 253-286. Miller treated the incident as a dispute over the place of unregenerate human activity prior to saving conversion, which he regarded as being, properly for Puritans, an arbitrary act of God's sovereignty. In this interpretation he was followed by Norman Pettit, in The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in

Puritan Spiritual Life (New Haven & London, 1966). Edmund Morgan, in The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop (Boston, 1958), regarded Mrs. Hutchinson's ideas as fundamentally negating the careful balance between worldliness and otherworldliness which informed Winthrop's conception of the holy commonwealth. Battis, in Saints and Sectaries, undertook to explain the affair in terms of Anne Hutchinson's allegedly abnormal psychology and the sociology of Boston. David D. Hall, in the "Introduction" to The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History (Middletown, 1968), treated the episode in the context of religious revival and decline, and of material privation, on the edge of the New-England wilderness. Hall identified the central issue as that of personal assurance of salvation.

In none of the forementioned works is it the author's intention to deal with the broader doctrinal substructure of the Antinomian Controversy. In most of them (save Mather's, Hall's, and in certain respects Morgan's) the specific doctrinal issues of the controversy are presented with insufficient precision (where they are presented at all). The same, very nearly, could be said for a sizable proportion of scholarly literature about Puritans, where theological issues are involved, including a number of seriously-intended treatments of Puritan doctrines. This is a sweeping judgment, though not an unqualified one. What is meant is simply that considerable verbal and theological fuzziness is regularly encountered in discussions of Puritan divinity. Such a deficiency is intrinsically troublesome to an historian of Christian thought whose

observations indicate: 1) that the Puritans' intense concern with preaching and the practice of piety was supported by an elaborate, carefully articulated theological system,--a system which New-England divines shared with their old English, and with numerous of their Continental Reformed brethren; and 2) that Puritan theology was more precisely formulated and rather more complex (in particular, more dialectical) than one would guess from its treatment in much of the secondary literature. The bias of the specialist, in making a judgment such as this, is freely acknowledged. Also to be acknowledged, however, is the risk of misinterpretation, if not of flat error, incurred by neglect of precision and depth when dealing with Puritan doctrine.

The chief printed sources generated by the New England altercation were published together in Charles F. Adams' Antinomianism in the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, 1636-1638 (Boston, 1894). Hall's Antinomian Controversy makes available all of the documents in Adams, together with additional printed material, and major, previously-unpublished manuscript sources. Hall's bibliographical note may be consulted with regard to additional MS. material. A number of works produced by principals in the affair are available in modern editions. Winthrop's journal is indispensible (in editions by James Savage [Boston, 1825-] and James K. Hosmer [New York, 1908]). The Winthrop Papers (Boston, 1929-), vols. III and IV, contain other material pertinent to the controversy. John Cotton's The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared (1648) and "Salem Sermon" (1636) are reprinted in Larzar Ziff, ed. John Cotton

on the Churches of New England (Cambridge, Mass., 1968). Thomas Shepard's writings are available in The Works of Thomas Shepard, John Albro, ed." (Boston, 1853; reissued by AMS Press, New York, 1967). Cotton's The New Covenant (London: By M.S. for Francis Eglesfield and John Allen, 1654), and Peter Bulkeley's The Gospel Covenant (London: By M.S. for Benjamin Allen, 1646), both comprising sermons from the time of the controversy, await the attentions of a modern editor.

In the matter of Puritan theology there is simply no substitute for acquaintance with contemporary handbooks. The most important, and the most readily obtainable, is William Ames' Marrow of Theology, tr. by John D. Eusden (Boston, 1968). Johannes Wollebius' popular Compendium Theologiae Christianae is translated in John W. Beardslee, III, ed., Reformed Dogmatics (New York, 1965). The Westminster Standards should be consulted, as representative of the Puritan doctrinal position formulated during the first half of the 17th century. The Catechisms may be had in Thomas F. Torrance, The School of Faith: The Catechisms of the Reformed Church (London, 1959). The Confession, with its Parliamentary, Savoy and New-England modifications, is available in Williston Walker, The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism (Boston, 1960). John Norton's The Orthodox Evangelist (London: John Macock for Henry Cripps and Lodowick Lloyd, 1654) is the fullest systematic work published by first-generation Massachusetts Puritans. Its counterpart in the second generation is the massive A Compleat Body of Divinity (Boston, 1725), containing Samuel Willard's lectures on the Westminster Shorter

Catechism. Norton touches upon, and Willard enters at length into, the full scope of what is taken in the foregoing essay as "orthodox" Puritan divinity. Edward Leigh's A System or Body of Divinity (London, 1654), although a compilation, is comprehensive, and rich in marginal references. Indispensible as an introduction to the content and literature of Reformed Orthodoxy is Heinrich Heppe's Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche, dargestellt und aus den Quellen belegt, hrsg. v. Ernst Bizer, 2. Aufl. (Neukirchen, 1958) (available in English as Reformed Dogmatics, tr. G. T. Thomson [London, 1950]). I. A. Dorner's Geschichte der protestantischen Theologie (München, 1867) offers an overview of the development of Reformed doctrine (translated by G. Robson and S. Taylor as History of Protestant Theology [Edinburgh, 1871]). Paul Althaus, Die Prizipien der deutschen reformierten Dogmatik im Zeitalter der aristotelischen Scholastik (Leipzig, 1914), examines certain of the methodological principles underlying Reformed Orthodoxy (e.g., relationship of philosophy and theology, and of reason and revelation). With regard to particular concepts, terms, and individuals, Alan Richardson, ed., A Dictionary of Christian Theology (Philadelphia, 1969), may be consulted, together with pertinent entries in the New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (New York & London, 1908-) and Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 3. Aufl. (Tübingen, 1957-).

In the matter of federal theology in the Reformed tradition, the reader is referred to the notes to Chapter 2, above. Perry Miller, in "Appendix B" of The Seventeenth Century,

lists pertinent titles by English and New-English Puritans. Miller's classic article, "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity" (1935) (reprinted in Miller, Errand into the Wilderness [New York, 1956]), requires revision in light of subsequent scholarship. Vide, esp., Leonard J. Trinterud, "The Origins of Puritanism," Church History, XX (1951), 37-57; Jens G. Møller, "The Beginnings of Puritan Covenant Theology," Jour. of Eccles. Hist., XIV (April, 1963), 46-67; and Everett H. Emerson, "Calvin and the Covenant Theology," Church History, XXV (1956), 136-144, together with the perceptive article by John von Rohr, "Covenant and Assurance in Early English Puritanism," Church History, XXXIV (June, 1965), 195-203.

Following are the principal sources for the foregoing essay (less those already listed), according to geographical provenance.

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